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JUL 31 1987



SIR MICHAEL SCOTT,

A ROMANCE,

BY

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

In these far climes, it was my lot
To meet the wondrous Michael Scott;
A wizard of such dreaded fame,
That when, in Salamanca's cave
Him listed his magic wand to wave,
The bells would ring in Notre Dame!

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, NEW BURLINGTON-STREET.

1828.

J. B. NICHOLS, 25, PARLIAMENT STREET.

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SIR MICHAEL SCOTT.

CHAPTER I.

I've heard my reverend grannie say,
In lanely glens ye like to stray,
Or where auld ruined castles gray
 Nod to the moon,
Ye fright the nightly wanderer's way
 Wi' eldritch croon.

BURNS.

SIR Michael and Sir James came down from the high mountain; the flowers which covered the way as they went were faded and gone; the green woods and supplicating multitudes had disappeared, and there appeared before them a wide and tumultuous sea, and behind them a dark and hungry wilderness. Yet they were not dismayed, neither were they troubled, but girded themselves for the journey, and went on their way. They

walked on the shore of the sea for many a mile, till they came to a place where the ocean ended in a deep and impassable swamp, and where they saw the footmarks of men, nearly effaced, on a narrow and crooked way, which dived into this dark morass. And Sir Michael said, “ For three thousand years has no mortal foot been here—this is the bourne whence no traveller returns ; and though millions of unhappy spirits have endeavoured to struggle through, and visit the green pleasant earth again, to no one has the power been given of passing this shaking quagmire. Think on what is good, and follow me.” And they entered into the path, and picked out their obscure way with cautious feet and vigilant eyes.

And they came to a slimy and reedy pool, covered over with a verdant mantle, which made it look like the firm path. And Sir Michael paused, and said, “ A Spirit is enduring anguish here. Seest thou not that the pool is disturbed, as if wild swans frequented it for the grass which grows on its margin ? ” And, as he spoke, a Form, a thin and miserable Form, came forth from the pool, and his looks were wild and woe-begone, and his shape was hardly human. And when he saw Sir Michael he raised a low and feeble cry, like that of a smothering child, and said, “ Have you

loved the gross earth better than the pure heaven ; and are you condemned, like me, to welter in this obscure pool, because you adored the created forms of the world more than the uncreated essences of Paradise ? On my bridal night, when the chamber was prepared, and the candles burned bedward, I was treacherously slain by a base rival ; but he won not the prize he sought. My love was true as the light to the morn, as glory is to heaven, and as sorrow is to the bottomless pit ; and she scorned him and spurned him, and lived for the sake of her murdered lord in widowed sorrows. And who would not desire to descend from the gates of Paradise, and see such a creature, to wander like a shadow around her favourite haunts, to glide like a star-beam into her chamber, and hover over her in her slumbering loveliness. This was my crime, and for this I am doomed to wallow in this slimy place till repentance frees me ; and can a spirit, can such a spirit as mine, repent of such a wish ? ”

And Sir Michael answered, and said, “ Miserable Spirit, repent, and return to bliss, for to earth thou couldst carry only terror or sorrow ; to man all the revolutions of heaven are awful, and we hear the thunder with alarm, and behold its fires with fear. In the mind of thy beloved one thy memory will be enough : thy presence, as a spirit,

would rob her of her happiness, and she would think thee in a state of perdition ; and the mournful composure which belongs to her mind would be exchanged for horror, and continual tears.” And the Spirit answered, with a groan, “ Thou wert never in love, and never lost a creature so lovely as mine. Thou art one of those beings, hard of heart, and fierce of nature, to whom the tears, the eloquent tears of loveliness, are poured out in vain. Go, cold and calculating Spirit, go : thou wilt find comrades on thy way as base of nature as thyself.” Ere he had done speaking he disappeared, and his last words were sounding among the reeds for a moment after he was gone.

And they went on their way ; and as they went they beheld before them, glimmering along the twilight path, a little dancing light ; sometimes it twinkled low and faint, like a glow-worm ; then it expanded in size, and increased in splendour, shooting its fitful rays far into the surrounding darkness. And Sir James said, “ There is an Evil Spirit before us, and we must take heed of ourselves in this eerie and dangerous way.” And Sir Michael smiled, and said, “ It is a sight pleasant to me, for it speaks of the neighbourhood of the green earth, and the gladsome looks of mankind. That light is for our good, and one who loves me is with it.” And so they journeyed on,

and the light shone bright and brighter before them, gilding the summits of the sea-waves, which tumbled foaming on their left, and throwing its splendour on the black and trembling morass, over which their hazardous path extended.

And they came at length to a deep and dismal brook ; the banks were fledged with upright reeds, set as thick as stubble and as sharp as lances, and the current was black as ink, and its smell was loathsome. And their forerunner light went trembling and glimmering along the bank, and seemed unable to pass the gloomy current. And Sir Michael said, “ Behold that dismal brook ; all the blood that man sheds of man on earth, and all the tears which are shed in vain, compose the stream. It divides the habitable world from the world of spirits, and sets a bound to man’s ambition, for it cannot be crossed but by those whom God has ordained. Look at it, and tell me, darest thou venture thy body in its terrible surge ? ” And Sir James stooped down and touched it, and as he touched it the reeds quaked, and were fiercely shaken, and his finger, like a spark dropped among gunpowder, communicated instant flame to the stream ; a gleam ran up, and a gleam ran down the current, which, like a serpent of living fire, seemed winding its way through the morass into the ocean. He started back with horror at the

sight; but his companion said, “ Be not afraid ; all this is ordained, and we shall soon pass the dark and melancholy brook.”

As he spoke he walked down the bank till he came to where it mingled with the ocean, the sea was dyed the colour of blood, and fire ran along the surface of the waters. And there stood a hut, where the surge met the land ; it was built of human bones, and seemed inhabited ; and Sir Michael went forward and said, “ Spirit of the bloody brook come forth ! thou art wanted.” And the moan as of a wounded man was heard, and the sound ceased, and no spirit came, and Sir Michael said again, “ Moody and miserable Shape, come forth.” And the walls of dry bones shook as with a whirlwind, and a Spirit came and stood before them, and Sir James gazed intently upon him, and marvelled much ; for he appeared to him in the lapse of one minute, in the shape and look of more than ten mortal warriors, whom he had slain on earth.

And Sir Michael said, “ False Spirit, I know thee, so take thine own shape ; thou art that fiend of blood, who first armed brother against brother ; and God has punished thee by making thee live among human bones, by the brook of blood, cu off from all thy miserable companions, and never soothed by the sight of thy brethren. While blood

is shed on earth, here must thou abide ; but even human reproach is gladsome to thee ; it reminds thee of the voices of thy fellows, and I see thee smile in joy. Go ! stay the purple current, till two mortals pass through ; thou hast the power to stay it, though thou art not permitted to pass thyself."

With a deep moan, and a tardy step the Spirit went down to the brook, and taking up blood in his hands, he threw it into the air, and it fell all around a shower of fire. And then he spoke to the stream, and the stream stood still, and there was room to pass, in which three men might go abreast. And they passed through, and the stream closed with a murmur behind them, and the Spirit uttered a melancholy cry, and returned again to his den of sorrow, pursuing them on their way, with many an idle curse, and uttering many an idle groan.

And the ground grew solid, the sound of the sea died away in the distance, and flowers which they had seen in the fields and gardens of the earth, filled all their way, and over the whole, the same wild and fluctuating light which had conducted them in the deep morass, threw its quiet and glimmering splendour. And Sir Michael called, " Elfcandle, Will-o'-the-wisp, or whatever name is thine, I charge thee keep the true and

direct path to the dwellings of men, else I shall quench thy wilful light, and give thee to utter darkness.” A wild and startling laugh announced that his words were heard, and a more steady and a clearer gleam showed they were of weight. And so they journeyed onwards, and they saw a herd of cattle, lying ruminating in a cluster ; and Sir Michael said, “ We are approaching the abodes of men ;” and they came to a battle field, and the warriors lay there as they had been struck down, by shot and by sword, and he said, “ This is a Christian country ;” and a little way farther on, hung two men on a gibbet ; the iron creaked with the wind, and the bodies glittered to the stars, and he said, “ This is a civilized land.” Still the wild light went twinkling zig-zag before them, and Sir James imagined that it was carried or accompanied by a form which he had seen, but he saw it too indistinctly to be certain.

And they entered a dark and lonesome valley, down which a slender brook brawled, and wound its way with difficulty among the ruins of houses, and the shafts of enormous trees, which filled all the glen from side to side. And the houses seemed to have been ruined of old, for the trees and brambles had grown partly over them, and there appeared no attempt of human hands to rebuild and restore them. Over the whole, a tower large

and ruinous looked ; the banner-staff had long been stricken from its summit, and from a window, a fox looked out, and howled to its companion in the neighbouring hill.

“ This is the green earth again,” said Sir James ; “ and the sight is gladsome to my eyes. Glad-
some, though her bosom is covered with the un-
buried bones of her children slain in battle ; glad-
some, though strife and sorrow are let loose upon
her ; gladsome, though innocence is unsafe, virtue
sorely tempted, valour neglected, worth scorned,
modesty mocked, and genius slighted. It is glad-
some, for man rejoices with man, but he trembles
in the company of angels and spirits.” “ You are
ever in the company of spirits and angels,” said
Sir Michael ; “ and this green, and to you gladsome
earth, is filled with the invisible servants of the
Most High, and the slaves of the spirit of dark-
ness.” And the wildlight which accompanied them,
went into the ruinous tower, and sparkled in one
window, and gleamed in another, and at last it
ran round the summit till Sir James’s eyes grew
dazzled with looking at it. But all at once it
sank from the tower top, came flashing down
the broken stair, precipitated itself out of a lofty
window, and rolled and flamed along the grass, till
it came nigh to where Sir Michael and Sir James
stood.

And Sir Michael said, “Come hither, my merry Spirit, come hither, and tell me what ails thee, for it was no freak of thy own brain which made thee tumble headlong down from the gray tower, and roll trembling along the ground. Come hither!” He spoke, and there stood before him, his page Brunelfin, but joy had fled from his eyes, and his frame shook with agitation. “He is there himself,” he whispered, “even the Evil One; he is there gloomy as a thunder cloud, kindled into fury like one of his eternal fires; and had I not flashed away from him like one of those levine bolts which were shot after him from heaven, he would have thrown me into his infernal lake, from which none but an angel of light could redeem me.” Sir Michael smiled at the unwonted agitation of his page, who looked for a moment in his face, and said, “Know you not the old enemy, him whom you have so often foiled; even him with the thousand names; see you not something dark and gigantic within the ruin? Behold, there he comes, see how lofty and how terrible he is.”

Sir James looked, and he beheld no terrible shape, no dark and fearful spirit, but a meek, and mild, and benevolent looking old man; his head was bald and shining to the stars; a few white hairs, such as one might soon number, were scattered about his temples; a mantle was thrown over his shoulders;

a book was suspended at his belt, and he advanced leaning over a staff, and accompanying every step with a groan. Sir Michael rose reverently to meet him, the old man threw a mournful look upon him, shook his white hairs, and seated himself before them, saying, “A weary world—few are men’s days, and full of trouble; and, dark-headed, or gray, we are the children of woe, and misfortune and sorrow.” And then he shook his head again, and said, “where come ye from, and whither go ye, my children. But why need I ask? Alas! a pleasant home, and a plentiful table, pertain not to me where I can receive the stranger, and refresh him, as my ancestors did of old. A lonesome vault, a glimmering fire, and a wild root or two, are all that I can call mine, here where I sit in the town, and by the tower of my fathers.”

And Sir Michael said, “Father, thy years must be many; for this town seems to have been ruined of old, and that castle has had the besieger’s fire spouting out from its windows many a year ago.” And the old man answered, “Thou sayest truly, my son. It was not yesterday that the invader came, nor the day before that the spoiler fell upon this rich and peopled place. I was young, then, and in my mother’s arms, and when the stream of armed men came along the vale I smiled, and delighted to see their polished helmets and

their burnished mail. And when the arrows flew, and the smoke of the culverins choked the air, I thought it pleasant; for I knew not what war was, till all my kindred were slain, and their homes consumed, and I was left a barefooted orphan among the smoking ruins. Well mayst thou think, therefore, that I feel the sorrows which bloodshed inflicts, and that when I curse man and his ambition, I am sincere." And the tears sprang in his eyes, he turned his head aside, and taking up dust in his hands, let it fall slowly to the ground, saying, " Such are the hopes of man."

And Sir Michael said, " Thou art a man of many woes, and thy white head suits ill with the cold air and this melancholy glen, where there is nothing to pillow it upon but the damp grass and the hard stones. Come, therefore, with me, I pray thee; I know a holy house hard by, where age will be reverenced, where thou wilt find food and shelter, and bow thy head to the sign of redemption as becomes one whose lot has taught him humility and submission." And the old man said, " Alas ! under the roof of those holy men virtue is not always safe from taint, nor humility protected from insult. Many carry their purity to a holy place, and bring infamy away. For me, my delight is the wild glen, the lonesome stream, the mountain-top, the haunted spot, and the ruined tower.

I love more to look on the crumbling castle, the mouldering abbey, and the monuments of human pride gone to decay, than I do on the blazing hall, the illuminated city, and the joyous festival. I will, therefore, abide here ; and if thou wilt share my cell, thou and thy companions will find that this desert place produces sweeter things than the running stream, and the wild berry."

And Sir Michael said, "Lead on, we follow." And the old man turned nimbly round, and with a glad face, said, "Come, and welcome;" and they all entered the ruined castle which towered huge and dark above them, and, led by a faint and glimmering light, they seated themselves around a hearth fire, in a low and ribbed vault ; and the old man said, "It is but churlish cheer, yet the bread which I give you, was baked in a far land, and the wine which I pour out to you, comes from grapes which were pressed by no human hands. I may well say it is divine, so taste it and tell." And he held out the wine-cup to Sir James ; but Sir Michael said, "Let age and gray hairs be honoured." And, taking the cup brim-full of wine, he held it between him and the light, and said, "It seems pure and good, and well may ye pronounce it divine, for it has the power which no common wine possesses. Drink of this cup and ye shall behold this glen, instead of being encumbered with ruins, become a

vale of palaces, and ye shall see princesses and kings shining in the public walks. Drain this cup, and ye will imagine that the path of perdition is the way to Paradise, and that the fiends who lead you on your way are chosen cherubims, and part of the celestial watch whom God places over the souls and bodies of men."

And Sir James gazed, and marvelled what all this could mean. Brunelfin stood close behind Sir Michael, and trembled like a leaf, and fixed his eyes on the stranger, and on the cup; while the old man himself gazed on Sir Michael; his hair seemed to move and curl like serpents, his person appeared to expand, and, something like a dark light, began to dawn around him. "And now," said Sir Michael, "having spoken of the powers of this cup, I shall show you a virtue which its owner wots not of." And he held his head over it and breathed a blessing, and named the name of God, and the red wine grew as pure as baptismal water, and the cup became as the rock chrystal. And he threw some drops in the old man's face, saying, "Be what God made thee, base Spirit." And the old man shrieked, darkness filled all the place, the castle seemed shouldered from its foundation, and wild outcries ran along the glen. And Sir James fled out of the place for fear, and saw the castle folded together like a column of mist,

and the foundations of the ancient city torn up by the roots, while a cloud rolled along the valley, and in the cloud he saw like an evil form, writhing in agony, and shooting from its eyes lights which fell on the earth, and became meteors to mislead and destroy.

And Sir Michael said, “The Fiend has escaped from his place of punishment, and will haunt the earth for a season, for it is permitted, as it was of old, that he shall have the power to tempt and betray. To me has he come in all the disguises in which his knowledge can clothe him, and I have detected him, and foiled him in them all. Behold that valley, wild, untrodden, and lonesome; to you it lately appeared filled with the wreck of a noble town and guarded by a princely castle which the spoiler’s fire had reached. But to me it appeared far different, nor do I say now that you see it as it is; the evil Spirit’s spells are still in the air, and you see a wild and lovely scene, sown with flowers, and sprinkled with dews, and looked upon by the new risen moon and her multitudes of stars.”

“And is it not what it seems?” said Sir James; “the ground feels solid under my feet, this flower smells sweetly, and that wild hare which comes out amid the silence of the midnight, and tastes the dewy herbs, is a creature of innocence and reality.

Even that wild fire gleaming along the lawn is the offspring of nature. See how beautifully it glitters, and lingers by yon little round pool where the moon loves to see her face in.” “Go,” said Sir Michael to Brunelfin, “go and bring yon wild-fire before me, you have the power; and bring the hare also, I wish to look on its innocent and timid face, and feel its fearful heart panting between my hands.” Brunelfin went, and when he tried to seize the wild-fire it sank into the pool, and went gleaming along the bottom, then started up, and a laugh was heard on the opposite bank. He followed it from the stream to the hill, and from the hill to the stream, now it shone high in the air, hovering over his head like a hawk, then it gleamed among his feet like a light thrown from a window, and again it flashed round him and round him, eluding all the attempts which he made to seize it.

“Dull and inactive thing,” said Sir Michael; “must a creature with a spark which belongs to salvation in it be foiled by a shadow so gross and so worthless as that; of all the things which pertains to the empire of Satan on earth, what is there more weak and contemptible?” When Brunelfin heard these words, he stood still, looked on the wandering fire, and said, “Come, Michael commands thee,” and the wild fire obeyed, and came

gleaming to his side, and the hare was browsing on some tender herbs which grew by the side of a little spring, and he looked on it, and said, “Come, Michael, my master wants thee.” And the creature trembled, and obeyed.

And Sir Michael said to them, “Why will ye still work the work of darkness in the presence of the lights of heaven; ye are indeed unworthy of my anger, for ye have the wicked will, but want the power, and all ye do against the Most High, and his servants on earth, is but to mislead the way-farer for a moment, or raise a feeble storm, which can only succeed in shaking a head or two of ripened grain, or in stripping the kirk of its cope-stones. Go from my presence, and go in your own shapes, else I shall quench the one for ever, and loose two hounds of darkness upon the other, which will chase it to perdition.” And they started away from before Sir Michael, and Sir James beheld with wonder a frail and feeble man and woman bent with age, going tottering along the brook-bank, and often looking back with alarmed and malignant looks at one whose power had commanded them into their earthly shape, and mocked their feeble spells.

And Sir Michael said, “Now be the charms dispelled which concealed this land from your view;” and taking water in his hands from the

brook, he threw it into the air, and from the air a dense and smoky vapour rolled rapidly away, and underneath it a vale, studded with cottages, a kirk and kirkyard, with its enclosure of trees, and its thick piled grave-stones, and a little square tower, from the summit of which a stream of blue smoke rolled slowly away, towards a sky, bright with the full moon and stars, were revealed to the eye, while in the distance the murmurings of a broad river were heard, and its bendings glittered like silver among the shafts of stately trees.

Sir James looked thoughtfully for a moment on the land, while Brunelfin shouted with delight, “O my bonnie, bonnie vale, many an hour have I chased the star-beams in your little rill; many an hour have I hung like a lanthorn of wild fire underneath the bough of yon blasted tree, and driven all thy pious children to prayer; many a time have I borne the wise-woman through yon river in flood, when I heard the moan of the wife about to become a mother, and often, often, have I reaped the grain which was shaking under the moon, and watched the sheep in the fold from the tooth of the fox. Bonnie, bonnie vale, pleasant are ye to me after having seen the hollow pit, and the melancholy hell, and all the opprobrious dens in which crime thrusts the creatures of flesh and blood.”

“I know it, I know it now,” said Sir James; “and O how welcome it is to my sight, after those scenes of agony, and those objects of horror and despair which I have lately witnessed. The dewy freshness of this vale gladdens my eyes, and no flower, parched by the summer sun, and drained of its freshness by the burning wind, ever welcomed the first coming of the western rain, more fondly than I do this green and happy land. There, along that stream bank I ran when I was a child, looking at the silver trouts darting here and there, and chasing the beard of the thistle as it danced down the wind. There, in that low cottage have I sat, hearkening to the martial ballad, or the minstrel’s tale, or the soft and tender songs of my beloved peasantry; and within that kirk have I bowed my head in innocence and meekness, and seen a thousand lovely necks bent in devotion, when the word of God was heard. Beauteous vale, though you yield neither the grape nor the olive, and though the thistle is on your holms, and the heather on your hills, to me you are dearer far than if your rivulet ran red with wine, and your hills were fragrant with frankincense.”

And there came a woman from a cottage, and said, “You are straying, and are wearied; come to my hearth and warm, and rest you, and when you have refreshed yourselves go on your journey,

and let no one stay you.” And another woman who stood on her threshhold said, “ In this vale have I and my forefathers lived since good King Robert reigned, and no one with dust on his shoes ; the stranger or the traveller has ever passed my door without eating and drinking. Come, therefore, into my house, for my fire is burning bright ; my table is heaped, and my cup is full.” “ And who presumes to give the way-farer food and drink, while I live here ? ” said a Dame who stood at the entrance of a little tower, with a wand held before her. “ Come into my dwelling, and taste of my drink without fear, and of my food without danger, for I have blessed the porch to-night, and no unholy foot can pass the threshhold.” “ And wilt thou, Sybbie, presume to talk of blessing the porch against unbaptized feet,” exclaimed both of her neighbours at once, “ when thou knowest the name thou hast among the douce part of mankind ? Ah ! many a fair face has gone smiling into thy residence, and come sorrowful out. And on Hallow-eve too, who would cross thy threshhold, though they had a home to seek, and a haunted road to go to it ? ”

And Sybbie of the tower smiled, and said to Sir Michael, “ Welcome nevertheless ; come to my hearth, there wilt thou see nothing worse than myself. My neighbours, as thou mayst see, are en-

vious of the power which my small means give me, for my table is ever furnished, my cup ever flowing, there is always a warm fire on my hearth, and men wonder how I am provided for.” “Then,” answered Sir Michael, “the malice of this world will call thy wisdom witchcraft, thy frugality evil spells, and the labour with which thou keepest thy table furnished, thy cup flowing, and thy fire blazing, will be deemed dealing with the fiend. Thou wilt have a bad name in the land; I see it all, but we are travellers, and above such superstitious influences.”

“I am thankful,” she replied, “that my poor threshhold is about to be crossed by three such wise and considerate persons. But come in. Blessed are they who wipe the dust from the way-farer’s feet, and give him a soft seat and refreshment.” And she led the way into the interior of the tower, followed by Sir Michael and his companions. They found her hospitality was no empty boast. In a roomy and vaulted hall burned a huge fire, made of turf, which warmed rather than lighted the place; and on the middle of the floor stood a vast oaken table, hewn from the solid tree, and on it was placed food for a dozen hungry men. She seated them at the table, and said, “Eat ye, and drink, without exchanging a word; such is the custom of my house—an ancient custom, and there

is a curse pronounced on those who break it.” And Sir Michael said, “ It is a custom, and let the curse come on those who break it; for blessed be this food, whoever dressed it, and blessed be this drink, whoever poured it out—eat, drink, and be silent;” and stretching out his hands to the feast, he ate, drank, and was refreshed, and so were his companions. And their entertainer looked on Sir Michael, but she uttered not a word; and she stamped her foot, and there entered two maidens, who removed the dishes and the drinking cups, and placed fruit on the table.

And she said, “ On Hallow-eve there is much mirth in the world, and the imagination of man peoples hill, and vale, and ruin, with the visionary multitudes which come at the call of superstitious fancy. To infirm old age they give the horse made of ragwort, and to the evil powers they give bodily shape; and they suspend the might of heaven, and let the monarch of hell hold rule till the morning light. Alas! that man should credit what is so unworthy of supreme goodness; but there is no limit to human frailty and human malice. Here have I lived, void of offence, these threescore years and ten, with my two poor handmaidens, and there has been a blessing upon me and my poor means.” “ And upon thy two handmaidens too,” said Brunelfin; “ for the wind and the sun

of this vale, must be gracious to woman, since thy damsels look so lusty and so young. I should like to live in such a blessed place, were it only that youth might return to my brown visage ; for youth is a blessing, come it by grace or by nature."

" Truly," answered the Dame, mildly, " the place might indeed be called blessed, which bestowed beauty on thy brown and unbaptized face. Thinkest thou that I know not Brunelfin, who haunted this tower of old, and wrought mickle mischief in this bonnie glen ; who charmed our doors, that they would not open ; who charmed our bees, that they made no honey ; who tied elf knots in the horses manes, and they refused to carry double ; who taught the birds to follow the owl, and the owl to follow the fox, and the fox to follow the wild-fire ; and the whole to dance through the pool and through the flossh, till a wren might have fought the owl, and a lamb been safe by the weary fox. I know thee, brown and subtle Elf, so be silent."

Brunelfin said, " And I know thee, and thy two wondrous maidens. Mindest thou the time when the bonnie ship came sailing up the bosom of the bay with all her sails set, her streamers on, and her merry mariners on board. Who was it that turned her left foot slipper in the running stream, and sent down the fair ship head fore-

most? I remember too, when a gallant bridegroom brought home his bonnie bride; the hill tops were living with people gazing on the youthful pair coming sweeping along from the church; the very steed which bore the bride seemed to arch his neck and glance his eye, as if he knew that he was the bearer of beauty; the hawk staid in his flight after the lark, and looked on her loveliness; and the cripple forgot that he was lame as he beheld her, and threw his crutch into the air. Who was it that turned the ragwort round in her hand, and made the horse sink as it forded the river? The bride entered the stream as bright as the beam of the sun, and came out of it stripped of her loveliness. I wept as I saw them waking her corpse? You will remember, too, the time when the river flooded this bonnie valley, without one drop of rain having fallen; for one who was in league with the Spirit of Evil staid the river, and threw its waters midwall high against these humble cottages; and the people fled to the hills, and there were many cattle drowned."

And the Dame laughed, and said, "Thou art truly a pleasant and lively Elf, and I love thee for the skill with which thou makest the accidents of human life, and the occurrences of nature, seem the work of the fiends. But come—this is Hallow-eve: we have apples to eat at the glass, nuts

to burn on the hearth, stocks to pull in the kale-yard, straws to draw from the stacks of corn, splinters to pluck from the plough, hempseed to sow on the unfurrowed field, and the shirt-sleeve to dip in south running water. She clapped her hands, and a young maiden, tall and raven-tressed, entered the hall, and heaped the table with fruits of all flavours ; and ever as she arranged them, she glanced aside on Sir Michael and Sir James, then looked bashfully down, and, with a sigh scarcely audible, retired.

“A rustic damsel, Sir Knight,” said the Dame to Sir James, “a simple country creature, unacquainted with this evil world and its ways, yet as fresh as a new opened lily, and as wholesome as a breeze in summer, new wakened from a bed of violets. She is an orphan too—the last of her race, and the loveliest; biddable as an instrument of music to the skilful lip, and musical as the lark at the opening morn. You shall hear her sing.” Then she took of the fruit and ate it, and of the wine and drank it, and with many a pretty and pleasant word entertained her guests.

CHAPTER II.

Thou, to whom the world unknown,
With all its shadowy shapes is shown ;
Who seest appall'd the unreal scene,
While Fancy lifts the veil between.

COLLINS.

SIR MICHAEL sat silent awhile, and his entertainer addressed herself to Sir James. “ You are one sworn to do deeds of high adventure, and to dare all manner of danger in your knightly course. But the deeds which you have achieved, and the dangers which you have dared, have been matters of easy accomplishment, since one so wise, so strong, and so powerful was your companion. You have dared death in many a bloody field, so has the meanest soldier; you have passed through the marvellous and terrible scenes of another state, and are here hale and well; but it was not your own courage which carried you, nor your own virtue which shielded you. There is a chamber in this place where you would not have the courage to remain for one hour. There is a hill in this land, on the summit of which no man dares stand and hear

the first cock crow ; and there is a stream running at its foot of which you dare not drink on Hallow-eve. What adventure wilt thou try, thou canst not try them all ? ”

And Sir James answered, with a smile, “ The nearest adventure is the one my vows bind me to achieve ; one hour sayest thou ? ” “ Aye, one hour,” she answered ; “ the chamber is ready, but I warn thee, Sir Knight, that this is an achievement of no mean peril. To that chamber many a comely knight has gone, full of youth and strength, and breathing the name of his lady-love ; yet from that chamber no one ever beheld one knight return.” “ What ? ” questioned Sir James, “ have they never been seen since, either living or dead ? ” “ Never,” replied the Dame. “ Neither sound of their voice, mark of their foot, nor shred of their apparel, has told of their fate. I have sat here, and the cup has gone its round discreetly, the decorous tale has been told, and the select song sung, yet no one has ever heard the adventurous knight depart from the chamber, he was gone and gone for ever.” “ Then they have to do with a strange adversary,” said Sir James ; “ of what nature may the adventure of the Elfin-hill be ? ” “ The knights who went upon that peril,” said the Dame, “ have been seen in the world since, and better far they had never been seen. I saw one ;

his shield was hacked into shreds, the helmet on his head was cut as if an hundred swords had struck it, his armour was pierced, and over his whole person the dark blood trickled; he had more wounds than any man ever before received and lived.” “But wounds will heal,” he replied. “Yes, wounds on a mortal body, given by a mortal hand, may,” she answered; “but these wounds never closed; drops of blood as dark as ink distilled from them, and from him who received them a sweet word or a smile never more came, but prayers without ceasing.” “And has no one told who the enemy is who wards this hill so stoutly?” “Aye, many have told; but who will say they tell truly. The holy men tell you, it is an evil spirit, who is allowed to visit earth on every Hallowmas-eve, and reign lord of the hill till the first glimpse of morning; the unlearned say it is the spirit of one unjustly slain, which once a-year revenges on presumptuous man the wrongs it sustained in the body; nor is there wanting those who declare it to be a delusion—that the spectral warrior is one of the imagination.”

“So much for adventure second,” said the Knight; “what say you to the third? what becomes of him who drinks of the running stream?” “What becomes of him,” answered the Dame, “cannot well be told; no one in my days has tried

the adventure ; and the tale which rustic tradition tells is too wild to have credence.” “ And what says tradition ? ” inquired the Knight ; “ tradition shapes her tale by the belief of the land, and what she tells has many believers.” “ Well, tradition says,” answered the other, “ that when the warrior stoops down to drink, he beholds not his own image, but that of a strange warrior where his shadow should be. As he gazes upon this liquid apparition it assumes substance, and ere he is aware, or has his blade drawn, it starts from the stream, and assails him with a weapon against which nought forged by a mortal hand can endure. The knight, be he ever so brave, is compelled to submit, and from that moment is never more seen. It is said, that when Sir Eustace Herries went on this adventure, the river bank on the next morning was bloody and dinted, and even in the stream a desperate struggle had taken place, for the pebbles were displaced. The warrior’s helmet was found, with one of his steel gloves, and they looked as if they had been in flame rather than in battle, for they were discoloured, and marked as if touched by living fire.”

“ All these,” said the Knight, “ are adventures good and true, and were I to make choice, I should challenge him of the running stream.” “ He will abide thy challenge,” she answered, “ and thou

mayst prove it in a moment. . Westward the river lies a good bowshot, and if fortune permit, thou mayst prove it before the hour of supper ; a hind of mine shall accompany thee, and retire when thou stoopest to drink.” Sir James rose, and said, “ Call thy hind, and let me be gone ; it shall never be said that a Christian warrior shrunk from a shadow, or dreaded to meet one of the spirits of hell.” She clapt her hands, and cried “ Ho ! Gilmore, Gilmore ;” and at her summons a hind came into the hall, and stared at Sir James as one unaccustomed to the sight of an armed man. “ Here, varlet, guide this Knight to the Pool of Dread, and when thou seest him kneel to drink, thou knowest what to do. Go, and be faithful.” Sir James looked on Sir Michael, who sat grave, and returned no answer with either tongue or eye, and feeling his sword in the scabbard, and adjusting his helmet, left the hall preceded by his guide.

Sir Michael now arose, and went to a latticed window, opened it, and looked out on the night ; many a star was gleaming in the centre of the sky, but all around the horizon a dense and gloomy vapour was slowly creeping over the hollow blue, and the shining circle was visibly diminishing. “ Dame,” he said, “ come hither.” She stood by his side ; he looked on her, and said, “ This night, thou knowest, belongs to the evil spirits who

molest man, and seek to wreck his soul, and I see by the dense and rolling vapour which usurps at so early an hour the splendour of the night, that to many a wandering creature this will be an evening of dread and woe. Now I know thee, and I know thy power. Thou givest man unholy food, and unblessed drink to darken his spirit and mislead his senses, and when thou hast accomplished thy desire thou sendest him out on some adventure of peril, in which thou knowest that the wiles of the fiend will prevail, and so a human soul is wrecked. How many creatures of flesh and blood hast thou endeavoured to deceive to night?"

While Sir Michael spoke she waxed pale, her frame shook, and she gazed upon him with fear and awe, and exclaimed, "I know thee now, thou wily and subtle Magician, will thy anger against knowledge and wisdom never have an end? By my skill and my spells, I can open the murky page of futurity to mankind; to the fair virgin I draw the express image of her future love; to the anxious youth I reveal the face and form of her whom destiny decrees to him; to the mariner I give a propitious breeze, and a fortunate voyage, and I show to the soldier the well fought field, and he hears the sound of victory in his ear. Thus I become the benefactress of mankind, and give

him a foretaste of happiness, more certain than airy hope."

Sir Michael answered sternly, "If thou seekest to brighten the darkness of human life, it is with the belief that grosser darkness will follow. This knowledge of thine is from the evil place; it comes not from heaven; it is the gift of the fiends, and through it they seek to establish a kingdom here, such as their great leader has established beyond Chaos. Into thy heart they pour this evil knowledge, and it gratifies thy vanity and soothes thy nature to be able to increase the sorrows of others, and manifest thy own might. For this a shepherd gives thee a cheese, and the husbandman flour, and the fruits of the earth are yielded to thee; such are the offerings which rustic fear makes to the power of darkness. But the hour is nigh when this will cease; the power of the pit shall be destroyed, evil shapes will be chased from the island, thou wilt be scorned and derided, little children will mock thee, and no evil wish of thine shall prosper, nor shall might remain with a single spell; the words of darkness shall be uttered in vain."

She laughed in scorn, and answered, "When I move this finger, there are ships sinking in the sea, and when I bend my brows, thus, there are tempests shaking the ripened corn. The winds cannot

stay my steps ; nor can the foaming sea, brightened by heaven's rugged lightnings, stop me on my way. The fullness of the fleece I can mar, the fatness of the flock I can turn to rottenness, and I can make the young bride's bed as barren as the desert sea. Am I one powerless, miserable, and weak ? Subtle Magician, though thou art, thou hast quaked at my power, and mayst feel it too ; it is not fated otherwise."

As she ceased speaking, a heavy foot, as of an armed man was heard on the threshhold, it sounded on the floor ; and Sir James stood before them, as pale as death, drenched with water, and his drawn sword in his hand, stained as darkly as if he had held it in the smouldering smoke and flame of a new kindled fire. " Speak, warrior, speak !" exclaimed the Dame, " hast thou vanquished the spirit of the stream ? — what hast thou done with my faithful hind, thy guide ? " " I know not whom I have vanquished," said the knight, " but of all the adventures knight ever undertook, this was the most wonderful. I went to the river side, the stars shone bright in the stream ; I could have counted the pebbles in the ford, and the smell of fish was in the air. I looked round, but my guide had vanished ; and over the pool there came a shadow as of a passing cloud. I drew my sword, and

stooping down, touched the stream with my lips ; I saw what seemed a shadow of myself in the flood, but the form grew darker, its eyes sparkled, it expanded as I gazed, when I arose, it arose also, and standing on the surface of the water, fixed its fierce and malevolent eyes on me, and it carried in its hand what seemed a fiery sword. I know not how the strife began between us, for I stood with my sword held out before me, without any thought of striking, when something touched the blade, and it felt as if living fire came running up to the hilt.” Sir James held out the sword as he spoke, she laid her hand on the blade, and the moment that she beheld it, she shrieked out, “A charmed blade, a charmed blade, formed of steel, forged in the lightning ; what shape from the world of darkness could withstand its dint ; alas the spirit will never haunt the river more, if it has been stricken with that terrible weapon.”

“ You shall hear,” said Sir James ; “ I plucked back my blade, I heard a low shriek, and then the dark and furious Phantom rushed upon me, and ere I could make much resistance, or use my sword, I was seized by a resistless hand and plunged into the stream as freely as a stone sent from a sling. I sprang to my feet, and there the Phantom stood with a laugh dilating its infernal features ; all fear fled from me ; power not my

own was given to me, and I passed my sword through the Form; it shrieked and departed, and the surface of the water seemed tinged with blood. My hand is yet shaking, and my body is yet trembling and pained with this supernatural conflict.” And returning his sword to the sheath, and shaking the moisture from his dress, he seated himself by the fire.

A dark thin Figure now came gliding in, step by step it advanced up the floor, and moved like a creature wounded or in pain, and seating itself on a block of stone by the fire, looked wildly on Sir James, but said not a word. “ You have achieved the adventure of the spirit of the stream,” said the Dame; “ achieved it as none ever did before, and you are either strong in the aid of heaven, or friendly with the powers of the pit. There are adventures to be achieved on this night fitted for all estates, and suitable to all ages, sexes, and conditions. The adventure of the Hill cannot now be accomplished, for it is remarked that there is a powerful sympathy between those spirits, and a man would dare the phantom warrior in vain who waked to-night on the haunted hill.” The Figure at the fire gave a low groan, and looked with a wrathful eye on Sir James, and on his weapon, which lay naked over his knees. “ But there is the adventure of the Haunted Chamber to be

achieved yet," continued she, "and it ought never to be said that a renowned knight came on Hallow-eve to my home, and left thatfeat unattempted."

While these words passed, Brunelfin went and seated himself on a block of stone right opposite the Figure by the fire, and putting himself in a similar position, and drawing down his face into a look ludicrously painful, sat and enjoyed the malicious and fiery looks of his opponent. Sir James looked on the one, and on the other, and thought he never beheld faces which gloomed with more malignancy or hatred. "Come, my two pleasant friends," said the Dame, "distort not your looks with vain frowns; why should creatures, the sole remaining relics of the Saxon divinities, fallen from their proud estate of gods, which ruled the destinies of man—why should they meet thus in hostile opposition and idle war? No; rule the will-o'-wisp in the morass; kindle the glow worms; catch the shooting stars ere they fall to form spectral meteors; do any little deed of harmless malice or pleasant wit; but wage no war with one another, lest man should take his advantage, and destroy you both."

Brunelfin kindled up like one of the meteors over which he ruled, as he answered, "That detested Shape a brother of mine? That grim half

embodied phantom, the relic of a glorious divinity? Foul Beldame, I know him too well to be deceived by thy glosing lore, or by his appearance. Know I not the drudging spirit which performs thy errands of malice and hatred? Thou sendest out the hind to the lea to sow hempseed, and thy goblin follows to scare him out of his senses with the looks of the fiend harrowing behind him. Thou wilest out the maiden to the lonesome rivulet, to dip her shift sleeve in the stream, and thy page looks out of the running brook, and with that face of perdition scares all sense for ever away. Thou sendest forth the virgin to the winnowing floor to winnow the empty air, and when she turns round with the hope of seeing her true love, thy dark goblin shows his infernal face, and she shrieks and pines away and expires. Thus thou goest on, but thy reign is nigh its close, and thy goblin will be thrown down into the eternal lake, to behold the green earth, or wrong man no more."

The Goblin of the tower grew darker, and, if possible, more deformed during this conversation, and from beneath his swarthy brow his eyes gleamed like two lamps seen at a distance in the dark. The Dame smiled, and said, "Hallow-eve has its wild arts, and Hallow-eve has its wilder speeches; but come, let idle wrath be banished, and let us have our Hallow-mass supper, and enjoy it as our

ancestors did of yore.” She stamped thrice, and the table was replenished with dishes from which a thick and savoury steam ascended, alike gladsome to all; even Brunelfin and his Goblin enemy showed symptoms of satisfaction, they turned up their nostrils into the scented air, and wrath and hatred seemed to depart from their animated and kindled faces.

When they were all seated around the table, the Dame dipt a silver ladle in soup, and said, “This is the celebrated broth on which she of Endor feasted the Jewish king, ere she summoned up the spirit of Samuel. The water which composes it was gathered from the thistle beards in the church-yards of the border, when they were steeped in dew; and the herbs with which it is thickened grew on the battle fields of Falkirk, and Halidon-hill, and Flodden. Sup ye of it, so that ye may see the dead without fear, and hear of the misery which is to befall you without trembling.” And they all tasted the Hallow-eve broth. She pointed to some apples, and said, “See these apples, so round and red-cheeked? they grew in a green island, far, far from this, where spirits keep watch that no one shall pull them. From the eyes of him that eats of them, the dark film which conceals immortals from mortals flies, the whole invisible world becomes revealed, and to him earth

has no longer any mystery.” And they all stretched forth their hands to the fruit, and ate, for they were pleasant.

And then she poured out wine into one cup, and water into another, and said, “The grapes from which this wine was pressed grew among the ruins of Babylon, and a dragon, whose den was where princes once had their palaces, lay, and guarded them day and night, but darkness was drawn over the dragon’s eyes, the grapes were plucked and pressed, and whoso tastes of the wine shall have courage given to him equal to the most doughty deeds; he shall have a heart that cannot quail, and a hand that would strike an incensed divinity.” And they all tasted of the wine, and found it pleasant. She placed the cup of water before them, and said, “This is water from no well which idle superstition has blessed. It was gathered during an eclipse of the moon, from the lips of the yellow witch-gowans, and those who taste of it will see all in its natural shape and hue; no spell can transform a ragwort to a palfrey, but he who tastes this may detect the deed.”

Brunelfin took the cup, and said, privily, to Sir Michael, “Bless this water, and I shall show thee what my skill can do.” The water was blessed, and Brunelfin took the cup in his hand, and said, “I learned from a wise woman that the blessed dew

of the witch-gowan could wash an Ethiop white, blanch the raven like a wild swan, and give the freshness and bloom of youth to wrinkled and decrepid age. I learned from a wise woman that the blessed dew of the witch-gowan could transform a witch's Hallow-mass horse into its original ragwort, and restore to their natural forms those evil shapes which haunt the earth in the disguise of beauty and manhood." And as he spoke he threw water from the cup in the face of the Goblin; he shrieked, rolled himself together, filled the hall with his lamentations, crying, "O earth, green earth, I must never see thee more; never quell thy warriors on the haunted hill, nor vanquish them in the silver stream. Pleasant it was to me to escape from penal flame, and wander amid the cooling dews and fragrant woodlands of this land. But earth farewell, farewell ye stars of heaven; thou swelling sea, and ye desert woods." And the sound, as of the rushing of sleety wind was heard, and they saw him no more.

"It is yet far," said the Dame, "from the witching time of night, and if ye will go with me to the summit of the tower, I shall show ye a scene worthy of contemplation." They arose, and went up a narrow and winding stair, and a wicket suddenly opened, and in rushed the fresh cold air, and the light of the moon and stars. The roof was of

solid stone, surrounded by a recessed parapet, and the view which it commanded was limited but beautiful. They all continued silent for a little space, looking with the moon over fold and frith—over holm and hill—over tower and tree.

“Yon hill,” said the Beldame, “on which the moon is spilling her liquid lustre, is the Fairy-hill, and many a merry dance have I had among the gladsome elves, and the good-folk, on yon glistening sward. There all manner of pleasant instruments were attuned; all manner of pleasant songs were sung; and to the descent of innumerable feet in the dance the hill shook, and the garland of trees around its base trembled. I was then young, as fresh as a primrose budding on the streamlet bank, and could bound down the dance like a lamb among the May-gowans; I am altered now, though at chance-times I can tread the flower buds with the frecklest and freshest.”

“And how happens it Dame,” said Sir James, “that the dance and the fairy’s midnight minstrelsy have ceased in the land; the fame of the elves and fairies has faded day by day, and already begins to be dismissed from the creed of the young and the inquiring?” “Ah! my son,” answered the Dame, “that question gives me a sore heart, and it would require a head more sagacious than mine to answer. This is an altered world, and

old age, and ancient feelings and beliefs, find but a wintry welcome with the nimble and skipping spirits of the growing generation. Alas ! the world is an altered world. There was a time when wisdom such as I possess was esteemed in the land, and kings and chief-counsellors leant to it as now they lean to the church. There was a time when we sat near the thrones of kings, and followed in the train of conquerors, and were as necessary to poets as the inspiration of the muse. But the church has usurped our power, and bestowed upon stocks and stones the might which our knowledge gave us, and has branded our useful skill as an art diabolical, and the winds which we waken to speed the mariner, and the evil dews which we send among corn to rebuke the hard-hearted husbandman, are called the works of witchcraft. And a strong stake and a stark fire is our doom." And she stretched her lean and shrunken arm over the land, and the landscape seemed to darken as she held it out.

" But it is not of this alone I complain," she continued ; " there is nothing so fluctuating as human opinion, and one who knows human nature, ought to be prepared for all its capricious changes. There is a Spirit which, compared to the eternal power which rules creation, is the moon beside the sun ; a lesser and ignobler light, but still a light

unwavering, steady, and unchangeable. How has man spoken of that Spirit which he now calls the Demon of darkness? Once that Spirit was worthy of showing his face among the sons of men, and in the presence of God, but, as men's inventions prevailed in the world, they began to despise the glory of the lesser angels, and to usurp their places. Hell, which was once a darker kind of earth, with gloomier woods and more melancholy rivers, grew augmented in horrors, by man's imagination and pains without end; and cataracts of fire were added, and the Spirit of the lower world was called the Spirit of Evil, and thrust into the infernal regions to rule over the tortured and the damned."

Sir Michael said not a word, but fixed his eye on the links of the noble river which glittered before him, here sparkling amid green-topped hillocks, there sweeping through a rich holm, reflecting in its bosom, at one turn, the outlines of the neighbouring forest; and, at another, the form of a mighty castle, which tradition said, sorcery had raised of old, but which cannon had lately humbled. He seemed to see something which no one else saw, and his eye gradually travelled from the summit of one of the distant heathery hills to the course of the river, where its stream, narrowed by a cluster of green mounts, rushed rapidly through, and descended a precipice with a

velocity which made the hills re-murmur and filled the air around with a chill moisture. Again his eye glanced rapidly from the river bank to the distant hill, and he stamped his foot, and exclaimed, “What, has the Spirit resumed his labour? then I shall conclude it!” And he descended from the tower, and was soon seen issuing out upon the green field, which, steeped in moisture, glittered in the moon as if sown with diamonds, and hastening forward in the direction of the river.

The Witch still stretched her long lank arm towards hill and stream, and a glow of satisfaction lighted up her faded face and malignant eye. The cause of her triumph, and Sir Michael’s exclamation, soon became visible; the river, impeded in its course, gathered its waters together, and, swelling above its banks, inundated the fields, and began to sweep away all the wealth of the husbandman. The brown and boiling inundation ascended the sides of the green hills, and whitened its waters with their flocks; it came sounding through the woods, driving the wild deer from their lairs, and rousing the fox on his errand of blood; then rushing against house and village, it swept away the well-thatched ricks of corn, and man, and woman, and child, and beast and fowl, began to tremble,

for the depth of the flood augmented, and its roar increased.

“Behold,” exclaimed she, “the punishment which is inflicted on the unbelieving, and those who mock the powers of the lower world. See that fair river, so long an ornament to the green banks through which it travelled, has now become their destruction. Man polluted its current with his inventions, and stained its silver flood with abominations which he said were for the good of man, and the glory of his country. The pure stream called on the powers of earth, and they came, and, staying its current, directed it against the abodes and works of man, and nobly is it warring. See, its waters already come boiling and foaming down the glen, and all these houses, filled with the dust of the earth, shall be swept off like snow when the rain comes from the cloud.”

But, as she spoke, the waters began to lessen ; a wind was let loose which stayed them, and a scorching heat came rushing, and drank them up, and from the bed of the river dark masses were seen ascending, and mighty forms toiling on its banks. Then a rushing sound was heard, the ground opened, and swallowed the diminishing inundation up ; in a little while, the river subsided between its banks, and the green glistening fields

looked out again, and the broad level landscape expanded beneath the clear cold moon.

“Behold,” said Brunelfin, with a laugh, “the waters own their master, and return to their channel at his bidding; and now he will chasten those base Spirits who consigned to the flood the fairest of all creation’s landscapes.” “Brown Elf,” said the Beldame, “thy master shall find that he has to war with Spirits more powerful and untameable than those humble things whom he vanquished of old, and who, from love of labour, cried out, “work, work.” “Yes,” said the other, “those were humble Spirits, but they were not humble till they were vanquished, nor did he release them from the idle and hopeless toil to which he condemned them till they sued for mercy, and forsook this lovely isle. I saw them when they went in bitterness to twist ropes of sand, the dry and searching material refused obedience to all their art and all their spells, and they toiled in agony, and cursed their miserable lot. My master loosed them, and they spread their dusky penons at night and sailed dimly away, and they have molested man no more.”

“Aye,” said she, “but the spirits with whom he has now to contend are thrice as mighty as they. From the realms of darkness have they lately come, their might is immortal; and shall celestial strength not vanquish the gross vigour of the

earth?" Sir James started suddenly from her side, left the tower, and was soon seen hurrying over the plain, directing his steps towards the river-bank. "There," she said, "the sorcerer and the bloodspiller are gone, and the combat which they must undertake will engage them some time. Come, therefore, my nimble and merry Elf; come, and let us go into my chamber of marvels till they return." And they went down the stair together, and came to a little door, beneath which a light glimmered, and which seemed seldom opened; it opened now, and they went both in.

A fire of cedar-wood and dried herbs burned on the floor, diffusing a fragrant odour over the vaulted chamber; and a light from a silver cruse threw a faint illumination on the furniture which it contained. On a settle of carved oak, as solid as iron and as black as ink, they seated themselves, and the beldame said, "This is my secret chamber; here the foot of man has seldom been, and here have I all the treasures which my knowledge has collected. Even this settle on which thou art seated, old and black and smutched with smoke as it seems, is a thing to be wondered at; it is carved from the Druid's oak, from this sapless timber the mistletoe has shot which was sown by the presiding deity, and cut by a golden sickle. For a thousand years it lay in the bottom of Tarras-mass,

till my goblin hind dug it out and fashioned this settle from its shaft. The mortal who sits on it forgets the wife of his bosom, and the children who clung to his knees, and admires only the rust and refuse of antiquity—the offal of the days of heathenesse.” Brunelfin laid his hand on the ancient seat, and said, “ No wife of my bosom have I, nor child for my knees; but all the enchanted chairs of perdition cannot turn a spirit such as mine into one of those gross dull things who love not the green tree in its summer glory, nor woman in her morning beauty, nor living life nor existing nature.”

“ See,” said she, “ into this mirror I look when I wish to see what the world is about, and whatever I think on is immediately presented to my sight. It is formed of neither chrystal, nor steel, nor brass; look into it, and tell me what thou seest.” “ I see,” said Brunelfin, “ my master warring with two dark fiends on the river-bank, and now in the stream they contend, and now on the pebbly margin. Hell will fail, and heaven prevail.” “ Thy saying is prettier than it is true,” said the beldame; “ heaven has of late lost some of its rule below; look again, and say what thou seest.” “ I see nothing,” said he, “ all is motionless and still.” “ Then He is conquered,” exclaimed she, “ and the spirits have prevailed; our reign will now have repose on earth,

and man will disturb us no more." Brunelfin dashed the mirror on the floor, and exclaimed, "False and treacherous thing, I believe thee not; for well I know the stoutest fiends of hell could not vanquish my noble master."

She smiled, and said, "Look at this peeled staff; saw ye ever a bit of timber so crooked and queer? Yet this staff is one of good qualities; when I hold it up the strength is taken from a thousand men, though armed with spear and shield; when I throw it upon the ground they are thrown upon the ground; and a two year's child might bind them." And he took the staff in his hand, while she said, "Aye, look at it well; it grew on the grave of one who took his life away for love, and was buried in a lonely place; and the maiden of his heart waxed melancholy, and wet his grave with her tears, and kneaded it nightly with her knees, and sorrow fell sore upon her, and she died. And there sprang an oak from the grave, and when it had become a sapling as thou seest, I plucked it up by the roots at the full of the moon, and it has power over those in love. One summer's night I saw walking in the green wood a dame of matchless beauty, and by her side was a sweet youth sighing his heart out, and his eloquent words and inspired looks might have moved stones, since they moved me. And she answered him with

a proud disdain, and waved him from her, and the youth's heart died within him, and he turned away, and I saw his tears. And I waved my staff in the air, and there came a gush of affection over her heart, she called him to her side, and sank in his arms; and I laughed, and praised my blessed timber. No wonder I keep it in a secret place.

“And see ye this vessel?” she continued; “I can fill it with the red wine from Brabant, though a thousand men guarded the cellar-doors or the vintage-press. Look, too, on this milking-peg, I can take it in my hand, and as I turn it, I drain the cows of Cumberland dry; nor need I leave one drop of milk from the Tees to the Tay. See, too, this charmed egg; I roll it in wool, and ere the dawn of morn a thousand hens could not have been more productive. In this bee-hive I have but one bee; look how black are its wings, and how brown its thighs; it hums not, neither does it seek the valley-flowers; but when the sun-beam gleams through my casement, it busies itself in the light, and from the sun-beam of heaven which comes glowing in honeyed fragrance, it drinks the delicious essence, and fills its hive with honey, the sweet taste of which sinks even a Spirit into the sweet slumber of forgetfulness.” And Brunelfin put his hand to the liquid treasure, and tasted it. He stood for a second’s space or so, and looked wildly around, then

he sank down and closed his eyes, and the dame shouted so loud that her voice was heard from turret to foundation. “Come hither, I have vanquished the subtle Spirit; come, and let us disport ourselves with him, for our enemy is in our hands.” Three or four Forms gathered round, and there arose a loud titter of delight when they beheld their unexpected victim. And the Dame said, “This is Hallowmas-eve, I have a long journey to make, where shall I find a nimble steed to bear me to the trysting place?” And they all said to her, “What ails ye at Brunelfin?” And she laughed, and danced, and said, “Ye are right; he will make a bonnie brown steed; so bring me my magic bridle, and let me begone ere Michael the wizard returns. Come—our master holds his Hallowmass-tryste to-night on Locharbrig-hill, and Sybbie Syllock shall not be hindmost.”

CHAPTER III.

Some of his skill he taught to me;
And, warrior, I could say to thee
The words that cleft Eildon hills in three,
And bridled the Tweed with a curb of stone.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

WHEN Sir Michael and Sir James returned to the tower, the hearth fire was shining clear, and the cruses were burning, but all was silent and solitary, and living thing could neither be heard nor seen. They went from chamber to chamber, from turret top to foundation, but no one was visible. Sir Michael smiled, and said, “I have lost for a time the truest, kindest servant that man ever had; long has he faithfully served me, and now he is transformed through his folly. I left him in the company of one whose whole delight is in evil, and she has practised successfully against one of the keenest and shrewdest elves that ever wrought a hag misery under a Hallow-mass moon.”

The sudden clatter of horses hoofs was now heard on the pavement, and holding the bridle in her hand, and leading her steed, appeared a hag

some seventy years old, who cried, “Up, sister Sybbie, and come; Harry Hourack is before, and Bell Elphin behind, and Davie Gillock above us, and they will all be at the trysting tree before thou hast thy foot in the stirrup.” And Sir Michael answered, “She is gone; and we are here two poor travellers, followers of her worthy art; but our power cannot charm a steed from the running stream, nor a horse from a ragwort.” “Your power would be power indeed,” said the hag, “if you could call like the magician Michael a palfrey from the fountain; but stay, where lies my sister’s garden?” She awaited no answer, but hastened away, and soon returned, leading two palfreys as black as midnight, and as swift as a pair of hunting hawks.

“Here, my children,” said she, “mount, and go; these creatures will carry you over land and wave. Alas, the day! Time was when I could have made you a steed fit to have carried you as high as the larks, but my means now are more limited, and all I can do is to create a horse which will clear the green sod like a deer, and skim the flood like a swallow. Mount, and follow me to the trysting place.” And they mounted without more ado, and at three bounds they cleared the castle-yard, at three more they gained the valley-side, and the river Tweed ran clear before them, and

the border hills rose misty and gray. “Sit fast,” cried their conductress, “they say a running stream we dare not cross; behold, I give the lie to the rhymer’s proverb.” And like a wild swan she made the water fly, and sprang up the opposite bank, and her companions in a moment were at her side.

“Hilloa, my bairns,” she cried, turning her palfrey around, “what wild doings have we had here. Who presumed to attempt the fulfilment of the old prophecy that the Tweed should wear a bridle of stone, and its waters should race o’er the bonnie holms like an untamed steed, and none be found to stay them. Behold these immense masses of solid stone; one was brought east, one was brought west, one was brought north, and another was brought south, and all to stem the silver Tweed, and throw its fair waters over the verdant fields. See one block is laid on one side, and another block is laid on the other; a third is moved near the bank ready to take its place, and behold, yon enormous mass has been coming to key and clasp in the whole, but the powers which moved it have been arrested in their labours.” And she pointed to a gray stone, of dimensions equal to a little hill, and rode on amid the moonlight, till she came beside it.

There on the barren moor the mighty rock lay,

and so fairly and justly poised that a child's finger could set it in motion ; and she rode round it and round it, touched it with her hand, and said, " It was no good will of those that bare thee, which fixed thee here, and left thee a monument to raise idle conjecture and inquiry. Look here, my children, for to the disciples of my sister nought should be unexplained ; the Spirit which bare this mass from a far land, is one of those who reared Stonehenge, but when he reached this spot with his burthen, some adverse power interposed, and he threw down his load, and retired till the hour of strength comes, and the ruling powers consent." " If I might hazard a conjecture," said Sir Michael, " I should rather put credence in the old prophecy, which says, that two stones shall stand in the stream, and two in the moon-beam, while beneath each the spirit which moved them shall lie chained, and doomed to hold them there till the day of judgment."

The hag looked strangely on Sir Michael, and said, " My son, where didst thou learn a prophecy which my ears never heard before ? Or rather, how didst thou come by thy knowledge, for now, by the pawing of my steed, I know that a spirit lies chained underneath." And Sir Michael said, " I saw the spirits begin their labour to-night, and the stream was thrown upon the fields like a raging

sea. And when they had placed the immense stones, and were rejoicing in their work, there came one stronger who overcame them, and caused them to pluck up the two centre stones, and hurl them to the places where they now lie, and because the drudging spirits reviled him, and mocked God whom he served, he took them and chained them each under these enormous masses ; and what he bound no power of darkness can unloose."

The hag sprang from her steed, and thrice she muttered a spell, and thrice she touched the rocking stone, but it moved not from its place. "It is fixed by heaven, and hell may not move it," she said, and sprang on her palfrey, and darted away like a swallow down the wind. The brown heather was left in the air from her horse's heels, after she was a mile on her way, and the quagmire was still shaking from the spurning of her palfrey, when she had left it many a furlong behind ; the fox stopt on his errand of blood, and from the fold dyke followed her with his cunning eye; and the owl had its foot on the mouse, yet its sharp beak descended not, but with enlarged and startled eyes it gazed after the rapid rider. "Hilloa !" cried she, to a death-light which was glimmering fast on its way to a cottage door, "give that poor man another day of the light of the sun, and come with me ;" and the ghastly light came glancing among

her horse's feet, and the steed snorted and sprang forward, as if it dreaded the messenger of death.

They now reached an immense plain, or table land, from which four streams ran four various ways, increasing in their currents, and glittering at a distance in the moon. All around was one wide wilderness of heath, with here and there a flock of sheep lying in a snowy cluster, and here and there a shepherd's house, throwing a gleaming stream of light from its windows over the brown desert. "See," said their conductress, "the well-springs of four noble rivers; but from their clear and unpolluted sources let our steeds not drink. These silver wells are undefiled by bloodshed in war, nor hath man yet stained their pure currents by his unhappy inventions. Ye four fair streams, flow on purely and freely, and run fair and broad, while the stars burn, and the sun of the morning shines." And away her steed sprang, and following the course of one of the lesser currents, she came to the limit of the table land, and looked down on the broad and noble valley below. There it lay with all its innumerable streams shining as they ran, all its fair towns, and rural villages and castles hoary and old, glittering in the light of the moon; while in the distance, and mingling its waters with the sky, rolled the wide

and magnificent bay of Solway, with all its headlands and harbours.

She stood, and gazed down the noble valley; then turning to her companions, exclaimed, “ O broad and lovely inheritance, over your slumbering beauty full many a time has the feet of my palfrey bounded, and so lightly did I allow him to press your green sward, that no hind was ever awakened, nor were the prayers of thy dames and damsels disturbed. Come, my children, for the hour of might is at hand, and we must not lag in the race, else our portion may be evil. Ah ! I mind it well ; I was then scarcely out of my teens, and though crossed in love, and miserable in mind, the bloom was still on my cheek, and the vitality of youth in my limbs. I was carried, I know not how, to the Hallowmass festival, and I marvelled to see so many known faces ; but my wonder was changed into fear, when I beheld the hindmost seized on by one of the fiends dark attendants. Cummers, we waste time, Satan will seize the hindmost.” And they seemed to make but one bound from the mountainous upland to the bosom of the vale, and alighting in a deserted burial-ground, the soft green turf flew like chaff from their horses’ heels ; and away they went, throwing the foam from their flanks like snow.

“Touch not that spot,” she cried, holding her hand to three flat stones imbedded deep in the green sward, and engraven with many letters, “a touch of that holy ground would dissolve the spell by which we ride. There three martyrs lie, who were slain for what men call the truth; and nature so reverences their dust, and so charms away all grosser things, that their bones sleep safer than those of a saint in thrice hallowed ground. There ! see ye yon dark Shape between us and the moon ? It sails away southward, and to men whose eyes are darkened, it appears a cloud; but in yon cloud there are vital things. Then see ye yon mist, which rolls along the side of the hill, and goes faster than the will-o’-wisp, which glitters at its side ? In yon sable mist there are creatures like ourselves. Like ourselves ? No; for we are but novices in dark knowledge, and the Shapes which hover there have the wrecking of many a noble ship, and the losing of many a glorious soul to reckon for. Alas ! I am accounted as one too tender of heart, too milky natured. I work no harm to babes and to sucklings, for I mind my mother’s love for her little ones; nor do I mar the innocent delight of two fond lovers under a hawthorn tree. Alas ! I once loved, and that tenderly, and I know what it is to have young hope crushed

out of my heart." And she passed her wrinkled hand over her moistening eyes, and hurried on her way, regardless of stream or hill.

"Fear not," said Sir Michael, apart to his companion, "for no harm can befall thee; we shall see to-night how strong the empire of darkness is, and who are its subjects. Thou seest that our guide has but half yielded herself up to evil, and that there is enough of gentleness and warm affection in her nature to redeem her from them all. We are now approaching the trysting-place, where on this permitted night the Evil Spirit assembles all his vassals, names them all by name, and stamps them anew with the mark of his dominion. He is gracious to those who are his faithful and laborious servants, and kind to the more youthful and blooming portion of his followers. But behold, we approach the trysting-place ! a place far known and noted."

They had now arrived at the side of an immense morass, which lay for many a mile glittering in the moon before them. From the summit of the hills, down to where the solid ground united with the quaking bog, the whole land seemed one continued garden, and halls, and castles, and churches, and cottages, glittered thick amid their clumps of trees, and the walls of stone, and the numerous hedge-rows. The morass itself was

hemmed in by a deep brook, which went on its way sluggish and slow; the wild swans grazed in pairs upon its grassy banks; and in the morning sun the herons stood motionless and inert, their long sharp bills dropped on their bosoms, and their eyes watching with quiet diligence the fish which swam in the stream. The brook, when it glittered in daylight amongst the upland villages, was pure as melted chrystal; but here the brown morass prevailed against it, and dyed it the colour of brandy.

“ We are now arrived,” said their conductress, “ within sight of the trysting-place; let us stay here for a moment, and see who are hastening before us, what new companions we are to win to the service of our master, and what comrades we have lost by old age, and by the malice of man, and his cruel laws.” They halted among some little hillocks, garlanded with brown hazel, and holly with its shining leaves and glossy berries, and saw before them a crooked and narrow way, which proceeded towards the middle of the morass; one of those old roads made in the unquiet times, purposely narrow, difficult, and dangerous.

“ The place,” said the hag, “ to which we are about to go, was once the loveliest spot in all the country. It was a blooming valley, with many a garden, grove, and tower; herds of wild

deer trooped on all sides ; the song of wild birds filled all the air ; and the smell of delicious fruit cheered the lark by the side of the morning cloud, on which was seen the first tinge of the sun. At once a hollow sound was heard, the hills shook, the earth gaped, water spouted from dry rocks, streams of fire burst from the marshes, and the valley moved to and fro, like a carpet spread in a strong wind. I might have said like an agitated sea, for the land sunk, and up rose the ocean, and added the valley to its dominion. One thousand years it was land, one thousand years it was a wild and tumbling sea, and where we now stand ships have cast anchor, loaded with the spices of the west. But two good Spirits who lived in the earth said, ‘ A fertile vale has been changed into a barren sea, let us change the barren sea into a fertile vale.’ And they arrested the waters, and they became motionless; weeds and flowers sprung up, and a green and blooming mantle was thrown over them, so that the whole seemed a meadow in the spring. And they raised a beauteous mound in the middle, and its head stood above the waters, and they crowned it with a palace, which shone afar like burning gold ; and the good Spirits said, ‘ We will go and obtain fire from heaven, to burn eternally in our new mansion, so that men shall know there are glorious

dwellers on the earth." And they both ascended to heaven, and they looked down from the firmament, and thought the work beautiful, but they blessed it not.

" And all this was witnessed by one of those evil Spirits who are jealous of the power of the brighter Spirits below, and he said to himself, ' I shall go and see this new mansion, for it shines so that my eyes are dazzled with its lustre.' And he spread himself on the night-wind, and alighted on one of its topmost towers. And when he saw that there were none to watch, he said, ' Let me call on my companions and take this palace to ourselves.' And he shouted, and there came a flock of his dark associates, even like yon flock of wild swans which we see now descending one by one from the cloud, and alighting by the wholesome springs. And so they entered the palace, and instead of the ethereal levin of heaven, they brought fire from hell, and when the Angels descended from above, they found the Spirits of darkness were before them; they saw the infernal rites they were solemnizing, they heard the unholy songs they were singing, and they threw down the fire from heaven upon them, and confounded them, and the palace sank till the pinnacle of its central turret glittered above the water, like a single star twinkling in a tempestuous sky.

The whole then became a dark and deep morass, and man framed a narrow and intricate way to the cursed mount, and built a strong hold, and filled it with armed men, and it became a place of violence and bloodshed. Why need I pursue the tale, has not war in this land shaken down the strongest tower? has not valour overleapt the highest wall? it was assaulted, taken, its topmost stones thrown down, and the bodies of its defenders given to the kites of the district. The evil Spirit then resumed possession, and to this mound is he coming to night. But he is not yet come. Let me see—when yon star, which is just risen from the sea, has ascended a man's height above that gray tower, the dark Spirit will arise. See, here comes one of his ancient subjects."

Sir James looked, and he saw a woman as gray as dawn, yet strong, and full of spirit, moving slowly towards the narrow road which led to the mound. She was not walking, neither was she flying, nor yet riding, but her motion seemed a mixture of them all. Loud laughed their conductress, and cried, "Lo! and behold the starest witch in all the west country, whose power once was such that she could on Hallowmass-eve make herself a steed from a hare, or a hemlock stalk; but see, she has not been able to make herself a four-footed creature, but comes to the tryste on her pikestaff.

Well, knowledge is prevailing sorely in this land, and if it goes on as it has lately done, the empire of darkness will disappear ; we have still a resource in the monasteries, for darkness is welcome to the monks, but light will be let into their dens also ; there is little doubt of that, and Satan will not have a place he can call his own, save Spain and the pit.” As she uttered this, the beldame hobbled slowly past, and sought out her way towards the mound.

“ Hilloa,” she shouted again, “ who comes here ? a young and rosy cummer. A welcome sight will she be among such a bevy of unlovesome hags, as old as the hills, and as withered about the face as antiquity itself. What can have tempted this young dame, so full of flesh and blood, and with eyes in her head fit to wile a saint from heaven, as the serpent wiles the lark ; what has tempted her, I say, to throw her youth and loveliness to the fiends, and come here to cast cantrips under the cold moon ? Ah ha ! I see a wedded wife, and she rides on the fiend Jealousy, and she gives her thoughts to darkness, and her hopes to hell, that she may have power over those who have robbed her of her repose. Ah ! and power will be given her, yon dark eye of hers shall select the deadly herbs, yon white hand of hers shall prepare the mortal poison, and yon other white hand shall pre-

sent the cup, and yon ruddy lips will smile as the deadly draught runs down. Ah ! thou weak well-favoured wretch, canst thou not see that the fiend has been dealing with thy suspicious nature, and that he has shown thee false visions for thy own undoing ? Go, go, thou art young, but there is not on earth a creature more wretched or more terrible in despair than thyself.” And she turned her head aside, and seemed to be lost in thought for a moment.

“ See,” said Sir James, “ here comes one gaily mounted ; by my faith, a gallanter gray never trod on iron, or champed a steel bit, and she rides as fair as a knight about to break a lance.” A jolly dame, with a scarlet mantle floating on the wind, dashed suddenly past, and, as she made the ancient pavement resound to the hoofs of her steed, the infant ice which was encrusting the brook on each side of the way, was heard to crush and crack, and the water shook and trembled.” “ Three feet deep of black oak, and one foot deep of stone,” said their conductress, “ laid over fifty feet deep of quaking mire, must yield a little to a common horse, and must yield more to a steed such as that.” And she laughed to herself, and nodded her head, and the twinkling enjoyment of her eyes told that she knew a tale worth telling.

“ How now, Dame ? ” said Sir James, “ you pro-

mised to describe the characters of our comrades as they came ; now one has passed, and you smile, and are silent." "It is almost too good a story to tell hastily," said the hag, "and deserves a winter's fireside and a pleasant group, but of its cream take a tasting : "The dame whom you saw, nay see, for her scarlet mantle is yet visible in the moon, was once one of those sedate and worthy women who think their character too well established for purity and holiness, to be in danger of a come. The priest of the parish was holy as a priest ought to be, and powerful in preaching-time, it was observed that he loved to visit and admonish his people, and so great was his fame that he had accepted three calls ; calls which are made from a fat living to a lean, and are named by those who receive them, calls from Providence. Now, there are men who look with suspicious eyes on all things, and those men said that the priest obeyed the call because he loved money, and loved to admonish the ladies of his flock, because he thought they had great influence with their husbands, and because he found their converse passing profitable, for it saved the expense of a wife.

"In the last place of his call lives the dame with the scarlet mantle, a notable woman and wealthy, with men-servants and maid-servants,

and flocks and herds, with malt in the mill and meal in the millee, with a horse to ride on, and a husband. And the priest visited the woman, and the woman visited the priest. And it fell out that the Spirit of darkness, who is ever prowling about, beheld this woman and the priest in devout converse, and he sought how he might win them to himself, and astound the godly. And he filled their eyesight will all manner of tempting and lascivious images; yet he could not prevail. And at last he said, “I have found out a way to confound them.” And he threw a spell into the air, and her husband and her servants looked, and they imagined that they beheld the priest and the woman doing as the foolish and the undevout do; and they raised a great cry in the land. And the woman lost her fame; but the priest lost not his church, for his brethren were his judges, and they judged charitably, for they thought on the evil one and his ways, and they decreed that the human sight is a thing fallible, particularly in the matter of a sound divine. But the world was blindfold and wilful, and the priest lost its love, and so he fell off from his sanctity, and with the woman yielded to the dominion of the spirit that betrayed them; and you have seen them to-night hastening together, in brute shape and human to the Trysting Mount.”

"I have heard many a tale," said Sir James, "but few such tales as this. But how has she been able to transform him from a priest to a good gray steed." "'Tis as easy as sinning," answered the hag; "but, lo! here comes one, a withered beldame, one who has thrashed the ripe corn on the riggs for three generations. See how furiously she rides, and whips without remorse yon bonnie brown steed; a creature that spur never touched, wand never switched, and whose fleet hoofs never trod before on iron. He would fain be free from his burthen, but she sits as if she were screwed to her seat; he has a charmed bit between his teeth, and he may champ in vain." A brown horse, whose tail streamed straight behind him, whose mane flowed freely on the wind, from whose nostrils a thick smoke streamed out, and whose eyes were fiery and bloodshot, went dashing past, bearing a rider who seemed not unworthy of ruling so free and noble a creature.

"There," said the hag, "there is a proof, were proof wanting, that there is no wisdom like that which our great arch-master teaches. Honest Alie Alisoun, there where she's going so gloriously past, might have walked on her shanks till she had reached the brink of the grave, had she been fool enough to abide by the counsel of learned clerks. But she got a sight of herself, and for these thirty-

five years and odd she has ridden at Hallowmass-eve as ye see her, and will ride so long as there is a ragwort or a rustic in the land."

"Aye, said Sir James, "and on what branch of creation has honest Alie Alisoun employed her skill to-night?" "Truly man," said the hag, "he must be but a simple creature in the dark craft, who cannot distinguish a steed fashioned of an inanimate weed or twig, from one made out of the noble creature called man. A horse of ragwort skims quietly and gently along at an even practised pace, and the weakest cummer in all the west country could ride on its back as gaily and easily as in a coach. But one made of baptized flesh and blood, my certes! its a creature of another kind, particularly if it has little good will to the task. And what friendly will, I pray thee, could a young and wanton creature have in being bumped on by an old hag without a hair on her pow, or a tooth between her jaws; thirty years ridden with the rheumatism, and afflicted with a cough that prophesies of the grave? Little good will, ye may well believe, and ye might have seen by that bonnie brown steed which scoured so gallantly past, that he was in a sad agony of fury and fear.

"But I see ye expect the story, and the story, such as it is, ye may have; for the star has a space for five such tales before it ascends to the point at

which our master comes. Well, ye see, yon was no common person, but a dame of long descent, who can talk of crowns in the train of her ancestry, and who has ducal caps hanging as thick on the high tree of her pedigree as ye ever saw sloes on a sloethorn. But then it happened that all this was long since ; for time had dealt hardly with her ancestors, had driven them from their towers, plundered them of their lands, and their proud blood all met in one daughter, who with a long pedigree, and pride fit for a prelate, had for a portion a house fit for a hind, and as much land as would pasture a cow of moderate appetite. With such pride and pretensions, no pennyless man presumed to make love to her, and with so little to support a line of ancestry which seemed capable of devouring up a fair estate at the bridal feast, no one with a moderate fortune dared to dream of her hand.. She was on the considerate side of thirty, when an honest man, with a fair house, with comfortable possessions, and well to live in the world, saved her from despair, and made her mistress over himself and his substance.

“ Now was the hour of her glory come ; the love of splendour which had lain like a smothered fire for many years, flashed suddenly out. Could a dame of such descent deign to sweep through her house in dresses unbecoming her birth ? could she

ride to church or city like an ordinary person, who condescended to drive hard bargains for the advantage of her family? and could she be seen instructing her maidens in domestic thrift, or setting an example of household labour with her own illustrious hands? No! she rustled it in embroidered gowns, and mantles glittering with gold; she rode to church and to city with servants before and behind, and old people held up their hands, surprised at her sudden splendour. Thus she went on, and as her splendour increased her means diminished, till her hall became a cottage, her estate a kale-yard, her silks and her satins glittered no more in the streets, and she grew miserable and envious, and sickened at human happiness. The evil spirit knew his time, and he won his way to her heart with the alacrity of a dream, and he gave her the power to appear according to her dignity among the sons and daughters of men, and she became dreaded from sea to sea.

“ Now she had two serving men who tilled her grounds. They were young and comely when they entered her service; but one became pale, melancholy, and miserable, and whenever he saw his mistress, he trembled. And his companion said to him, ‘ What makes you so pale and so haggard?’ And he answered, ‘ Lie where I lie, and

you will be as pale and as haggard as I." And his comrade lay as he proposed, and resolved to remain awake. But before midnight came, slumber fell upon him, and he heard a rustling and a muttering over his head. Then a sudden tremor seized him, and he felt astounded ; he sprang from his bed, uttered a strange cry, and rushed deliriously into the evening air. And he felt as if a hand were upon him, and that he was not either in mind or body, the same as before ; and he reached in his flight a broad clear river, and the new risen moon was behind him, and threw a shadow on the stream ; and he looked and he saw the shadow of a horse and rider, and as he moved the shadow moved, and he then felt that he was transformed by some evil influence, and that an evil shape rode upon him.

And he rushed through the river, and flew to a boundless desert of heath, making the blossomed heather fly with the spurning of his heels. And away he went, the breath rushing from his expanded nostrils, the sweat streaming from his flanks, and the foam strewing the way like snow. He came to a shepherd with a stolen lamb on his back ; the man dropped his burthen, and fell on his knees in prayer. He came to a fold ; a fox stood on the top of the fence, singling out its defenceless prey below. The tyrant of the wilderness gave a

howl, and dropt from the wall like a stone. He came to a wild wood, and a man was there digging a midnight grave, he threw his spade down and fled, and his intended victim escaped. And he came to the wide wild sea, and he rushed into the flood, and he trod on the waters as on the fallow land: still he saw the shape on his back, and felt the infernal spur.

And the figure which sat on him said, “Thy efforts are all in vain, the charmed steel between thy teeth is too strong for thee, so submit, and it will be better for thee.” He was urged through the foaming sea, and spurred up a steep mountain; and the mountain felt under his feet as if it were on fire. And when he reached the summit, seven spirits came out of a flaming cavern, which stood open night and day, belching fire and smoke into the pure blue of heaven. And the seven spirits said, “Fair daughter, thou art welcome, alight and enter in.” And she leaped down and was conducted into the fiery cavern. When she returned, her looks were wild, and she mounted and spurred down the mountain side; dashed headlong through the foaming sea; crossed the brown moorland before the gray dawn, and reached home before the waking of the lark. And the bit was taken hastily from his lips, he felt a blow as of a bridle rein on his back, he heard some muttered

words, and then he found himself stretched on his bed, beside his companion, panting as if his heart would have leaped through his sides, covered with foam, and weary beyond all experience in fatigue.

And his companion awoke and said, “Aha lad, you were lying where I lay; how liked you the change?” And he replied, “God have mercy on my soul, for a she-fiend has used my body for her horse, and I have galloped round the earth since midnight.” “O man,” said his comrade, “let not such a small matter vex you; here am I, simple creature as I seem; I could write a book full of the most marvellous adventures, for I have been ridden post by that stark witch, our mistress, these three years come Beltain. But such things must be with those who serve witches; and it is really not worth while to twist one’s mouth about it.” “By the soul of man,” replied the other, “the starest fiend of the pit, let alone the starest witch of the district, shall not use me on errands of perdition, and the next time that Cummer comes, she shall find that I have a charm as effectual as her own. Have ye ever seen her perform the transformation?” “Perform the transformation!” answered his comrade; “well I wot have I many’s the time and oft; she just stole on tiptoe to the bedside, shook her brazen bridle over my head,

and to the road took I, with Cummer on my back. I'm not sure that I have done justice to myself in telling you such a bonnie secret. You see it was queer at the first to be spurred over hill and hollow, and deep sea, with a carlin on my back, and a bit of enchanted steel between my lips. But use lessens marvel, as the wise poet says, and I grew that I cared but little about it; and as I grew careless, Cummer grew kind, she fed me with sops of cream, and tit bits; and when we were warmed on the road, she began to discourse with me; and really with her well chosen words and the many pleasant journeys, on which we went; I cannot but say that the service-time flew lightsomely by, and though I look pale and thin on't, it keeps down corruption, and I'm as steeve and stark as the tempered steel." When this evening came, he was sought by his mistress; the enchanted bridle did its work, but not till he had seen her shake it thrice, and heard her mutter, "All that's man become a horse." So they are away to the Hallow-tryste, and ere the day dawns, ye will be witness to mickle, that mayna well be spoken of. But see, the star is nigh its place, start and begone." And they rode along the narrow way, and entered the charmed ground.

CHAPTER IV.

That night a child might understand,
The Deil had business on his hand.

BURNS.

WHEN they reached the mount Sir James was struck with the beauty and repose of the place. The remains of an old castle of hewn stones shone gray and vast amid the quiet moonlight; its garden plots and orchard grounds were yet visible by the shrubs and the fruit trees, and the whole was bound in by a deep, a broad, and an impassable morass, white with the beard of the canna, as if it had been newly snowed upon, and silent as the sky above it, but for the cry of the owl from the castle wall, and the hollow moan of the sea which murmured in the distance, amid its shelly and caverned shores. In the centre of the mound, where the wide court of the castle was still visible, stood the colossal image of an ancient warrior; his helmet was undefaced, his close chain mail still covered his form without concealing it, and he held in his hand an enormous war-axe. The figure seemed of metal, as black as

ink, and harder than iron ; time, which defaces the most delicate labours of man's genius had left it unimpaired.

Sir James gazed upon the colossal warrior, looked at his sinewy arm, his round and proportioned limbs, and his beard and locks short and curled like the back of a moorland ram. "Aye," said the dame who accompanied him, "he was a warrior in his day. When he shouted his war-shout, and rushed upon the spears with that tremendous weapon in his hand, who was there of mortal might to withstand him ?" "Yes," answered Sir James, with a smile ; "were he endowed with spirit and life as much as he is stamped with the external bearing of a warrior, we might well say who could withstand him. But a warrior of flesh and blood is one thing, and one of inanimate metal another." "Aye, aye," replied she, with a smile, "but there was a time when that cold and insensible statue before you was informed with life, and his noble and lofty brow was instinct with immortal thought ; and, Sir Knight, beware—that spirit has not so wholly forsaken him but that it may return, and woe then to those who have mocked the dark demi-god. He is not of mortal workmanship, nor stands he here the idle occupant of this ruin ; he is here for a purpose and for a time, and woe to those who are found beside him when he starts into life."

Sir Michael, with a sarcastic smile on his lip, and scorn in his dark eye, walked round and round the swarthy figure, and the colossal figure seemed to move and shake.

“ Now,” exclaimed the Dame, “ the star has reached its height in the sky, and we shall behold the Power of the lower world appearing on earth; not in his might, and armed with the energy of all his nature and his dwelling-place, but in meekness and mildness, with harpings perchance, and with song. Ah, I have seen him reveal himself like a sweet and lovely dame; like a bard in the moment when thoughts of heaven descend upon him; like a young warrior coming in honour from the field of battle; like a pious and sainted person in whom there was no guile; or like a bright and beauteous exhalation. Lo! he is here.”

A sudden mist, thin and circling, came rolling over the morass, thickening and enlarging as it came, till it covered the dark extent of bay as with a mantle of snow, and touching the circumference of the mount, stood around it as a wall. A sudden cloud, too, descended from heaven, shutting out the light of the moon and stars, and over head hung motionless and dark, while upon the earth, which remained visible, a quick and nimble light came gushing like the summer lightning from behind a black cloud. Sir James and his companions stood

looking alternately above and below ; but nothing was yet seen, though the presence of something living was felt. There was a strange sound overheard like the singing of a brook among its pebbles, and a murmuring arose from the ground as if it were convulsed and in agony.

As Sir James gazed, imagining that he beheld shapes amid the moving mist, and listened with the belief that voices were sounding in the air, there sprung up a light amid the ruins, which, glancing on the broken arches and crumbling walls, flashed far above-head, tinging the misty firmament with a dark red lustre. As they looked the chasms in the walls seemed filled up, the arches closed, and the rents became whole, while the shrubs, rooting into the crumbling masonry, waved freely to the air, and seemed converted into banners, and a sound issued from the castle as of a multitude of people. “Behold now,” said the Dame, “the descent of the followers of him, whose kingdom is below ; they are gathering from far lands, and in all shapes they come, with the wing of the fowl, with the fin of the fish, and the foot of the wild roe.”

As she spoke a pair of gray owls stooped through the mist, and alighting on the summit of the tower, disappeared amid the turrets. “See,” said the Dame, “two of our chief ministers on earth are come ; in yon two unclean birds you behold a

pair of monks, fat, fair, and loaded with beads, crosses, images, and indulgences. Away they will soon go among the simple people of the earth, imposing their own imaginings for the certainty of revelation; selling releases from sin for sums of money, and seats in the Pope's chariot which plies between purgatory and paradise. Well our wily master knows how much his kingdom here is promoted by these devout worthies, and how highly they contribute to preserve the reign of solemn darkness, and keep away the dawn of light. From the great master of wiles will they receive fresh knowledge; revelations of new impostures will be made, and the world will wonder and reverence the holy relics which piety discovers. Welcome, therefore, are these holy monks, and they will have a seat at this great assembly nigh the father of solemn fraud and ingenious deceit."

The clang of wings was heard over-head, and there came from the cloud a troop of wild swans; they all alighted one by one on the margin of the brook, and such a shake they gave their plumes, that all the mount re-murmured. Loud laughed the Dame, and said, " See how milk-white and pure they come—creatures like the unsunned snow; they will be black enough soon. Why should the young and the dainty daughters of man come and enter into fellowship with the fierce, the

malignant, and melancholy spirits, whose pastime is human pain.” And as she spoke there came from the brook-bank six young and merry dames, rustling in silks and shining with jewels, and every step they took they seemed to feel that they honoured the earth by setting their dainty feet upon it.

“Aye, aye,” said the Dame, “see ye my plumed and my painted madams? who would think that they who lay so soft and slept so sweetly, and walked in men’s eyes like heaven-descended things, would desire to have communion with the dark spirits of the lower world? They are six, and each has her history—envy, hatred, lust, revenge, vanity, and pride; these wreckers and ruiners of many a noble form have sent them here. The gratification of their passions has made them vassals, and welcome will their services be, for youth and loveliness can do much for either heaven or hell. They are now entered the presence: heard ye that hollow murmur? it was the applause which their coming received. Alas, the wrinkled and the old feel that their power is decayed, and that they can only afflict and annoy man, without wrecking his salvation.”

The clear light was darkened, and there descended a flight of blood-ravens; large and grim, their eyes seemed fire, and their croak sounded like the creaking of a gibbet in the wind. They

flew into the castle-porch and disappeared. "Welcome will these chosen ministers of human misery be," exclaimed Sir Michael; "they are those who delight in spilling righteous blood, who pass an unjust sentence on the sons of men, and with God and religion on their lips, and hell in their hearts, shed the blood of the spotless and the innocent. Saw ye not how sooty and how dark they looked? they can never assume the hue of purity, and they must come into the presence of fiend or angel with the blackness of their natures visible in their forms. They are from Spain, that land of paradise, but habitation of demons; where the rack, the wheel, the whip, the dungeon, and the gibbet, are busy converting men to the national faith. Inquisitors are they; men selected by the holy church, whose natures are hardened against the cry of mercy, who give up all the tie of man to man, of brother to brother, who know no country, who never heard their children cry, and whose souls are steeled by an infallible faith to maintain the supremacy of their church. Hell has no surer servants.

"Now," continued Sir Michael, "the moment is at hand when the kingdom of Satan on earth will be fully revealed, and ye shall behold his servants and his ministers by whom he seeks to sustain his dominion against the power of God. On this unhallowed spot has he reigned and ruled since the

Church fell from its purity, and men were sunk in ignorance, and on this spot will he rule till the light prevails against darkness, and men worship the true God instead of stocks and stones.” He had not well done speaking, when the colossal figure lifted his war-axe, and, smiting the ground, up-flashed a stream of fire, which, gushing against the dark firmament of clouds, formed a canopy of flame over-head too brilliant to be looked long upon. A loud shout of joy arose on all sides, the whole place was thronged with dark figures and glowing faces, and innumerable hands were waved in token of joy and gladness.

And Sir James saw a throne before him, and there sat on the throne the figure of a fair youth, on whose chin the beard seemed but budding; his brow was high and serene, his eye was mild and benevolent, nor did he encumber himself with a robe; but a sword lay at his left hand, and a pen at his right, and his right foot rested on a human head, new severed from the body. He looked stedfastly upon him, and said to his companion, “This is not a fiend of the pit of punishment, whose form hell’s fire has vexed and scorched, but an angel of light, pure as he descended from the place of glory bearing the sword of justice in one hand, and the pen of knowledge in the other.” “Look at him more seriously,” said Sir Michael,

“and look around and above you with a settled and stedfast eye.”

And he looked above him, and he beheld amid the firmament of fire ten thousand woeful forms moving, and writhing in agony, yet were they not fully and roundly figured out, but rather seemed painted by some inspired hand; and amid the darkness around, he also saw the dusky faces of tormenting spirits, half seen, half hid ; their eyes rejoicing at the sight of human victims, and only withheld by a power which they could not control from laying waste the wide earth. And when he looked on him on the throne he beheld a ray of heaven’s unextinguishable lightning, gleaming amid his locks ; his brow quivering with agony, and his long hair writhing in separate tresses, as if endowed with sudden life. The sword in his left hand was reeking with blood, the pen in his right hand was dipt in poison, and the glittering throne on which he sat was built of headless bodies ; and all around were strewn daggers, poison cups, chains, axes, licentious songs, false histories, perjuries, dispensations, indulgencies, mitres, coronets, and crowns. Sir James trembled to see this terrible sight, and said to himself, “ Woe, woe to the people of the earth, for the evil spirit has established his throne among them, and every unjust sentence, every drop of blood unrighteously shed, every gross

and licentious lyric, every page of wilfully false history, and every permission for sin and folly, fixes him the firmer on his throne, and gives him rule more surely among the creatures of sorrow and sin.

And then he looked round, and wondered when he beheld so vast an assembly. Rank succeeded rank of forms and faces ; the powerful ones of the earth were there ; warriors bloody from the battle field, fighting for dominion ; counsellors from the senate and the throne, who had poisoned the cup of sovereign mercy with their speeches and their counsels ; historians who darkened the page of heroism, and brightened that of deceit and blood ; poets who had polluted the pure feelings of true love, and mocked the sober delights of domestic joy ; women were there not a few, both young and old, wrinkled and lovely, of high rank, and of humble degree, and priests without number, of all churches, and of all beliefs. Over the whole a strange illumination was thrown, a conflagration glare, which gave an unnatural glow to their faces, and showed the workings of many an evil passion, as clearly as a star is reflected in a stream. Now this light did not shine on Sir Michael and his companion. They stood and beheld all ; no one was sensible of their presence save the Spirit on the throne, and he knew and felt that his power

had its limit, that his reign would have an end, and that both were approaching.

“ Sons and daughters of my love,” said the Evil Spirit on the throne, “ I see you gathered about me, increased in strength and augmented in numbers : long may the power which inspires you, continue. I have looked around this green isle, and halting in every city, and resting on every hill, I saw on all sides fresh causes for exultation and joy. For every fifty men there is a priest whose business is to keep them from light—to keep them crawling in the dark, when they might walk in day, and who conceals knowledge from them, and hides the presence of the true God, and causes them to kneel to gods of his own invitation. Well and worthily are they acquitting themselves, and there will be less need of demons among mankind ; the brood of priests is increasing. Next in power as my servants, come the chief rulers and counsellors of the earth. It requires little labour as of old to instil evil into their minds ; to visit them with ambitious visions, to influence them against natural justice, and make them obey the call of conquest rather than of mildness and benevolence. They sit and behold with an evil eye the prosperity of one another ; and knowledge, which is as food from heaven, only gives them a fuller light to work wickedness by. They have invented too,

swifter and surer engines of destruction, and they have launched castles on the flood by which ruin will descend like lightning on remote lands, and in all places on earth will there be a bloody foot imprinted."

The Evil Spirit paused, and there arose a man gray with age; sore oppressed was he with the weight of years; he had been a state counsellor through three kings reigns, and his spirit was bold, subtle, and loved blood." Ruler of the lower realm," he said, with a meek and mild voice, "you wrong your faithful servants by an imperfect description of their merits. For sixty years and odd have we laboured to make the science of sovereign rule perfect, and the arts which we have employed, the inventions we have found out, and the laborious industry with which we have reared the superstructure of the right divine of kings to govern as they please, have been nearly rewarded by complete success. Have we not pampered the priesthood till the land swarms with idle full fed divines who scatter darkness as naturally as midnight itself, and who preach up that the sceptre and the crown are the images of God's visible reign on earth? Have we not a prison in every town, and a gibbet in every village for him who dares to speak out like a freeborn man? Have we not filled our benches with judges who speak not

according to law or justice, but who give opinions according to power, and pass sentence conformable to the craft of counsellors? Have we not invented that glorious instrument of sovereign power, a standing army, armed them with arms purposely made for man's destruction, trained them up diligently in the art of shedding blood, clothed them in scarlet, and filled their pockets with gold, and won them and wooed them to be our faithful servants by many a large fee? And is it not a fair sight when peace is in the land, and the song of the silly husbandman is heard in our vallies, to see an hundred thousand armed men longing for the trumpet to summon them to attack, plunder, and destroy?" And the old man looked round with a glow of conscious triumph on his faded brow.

"Thou hast spoken well and truly, father," said the Evil Spirit, "and I rejoice to hear that the lessons of ruling wisdom, which for these three thousand years I have so anxiously taught to man, are bringing forth fruit at last. Alas! it is true, we have hitherto had many a happy hour, at the close of many a well-fought field I have seen the country laid desolate, heard the virgins shrieking, and the orphans crying for bread; but these were but casualties, compared to what I shall now enjoy from thy improved system, and thy enlightened tactics. We shall have no more of those hasty

meetings of inexperienced warriors, undirected by skill, and unpointed by experience to some vulnerable and mortal part. We shall have the regular march of bloodshed and conquest—it will become one glorious struggle from centre to circumference of the world; and as man's courage is great, of war there will be no end, and the stream which moistens hell with blood unjustly shed, will be augmented, and all the fiends will rejoice. Nor to the green earth alone shall man confine himself: the deep sea, which has hitherto but heard the perishing cry of the sinking mariner—for I speak not of the little contests between the barks and boats of ancient nations in our harbours and bays—the unfathomable ocean shall bear witness to man's desire of dominion and blood, and the empire founded on the deep shall have its million of bleeding victims.” A loud murmur of joy interrupted the speaker.

When the applause ceased there rose a fair young dame, her velvet robe sparkled from cape to hem with diamonds, her long and waving locks were studded with precious stones, her cheeks were pure and blushing, like roses opening in summer dew, when she waved her hand a hundred hearts were awed, and when she opened her lips there was a glance of general gladness, because of the music of her voice.

“ Mighty Sir,” said she, “ you are welcome to earth, but you are less needed than what you believe. Think you, because all are ruled and governed here with external grace, courtliness, and decorum, that we are therefore forsaking your ancient sway, and bowing the knee to other deities ? This is but a polite refinement, by which sin is rendered agreeable ; we have baited the barbed hook deliciously, and the anglers from the lake of darkness catch ten now where before they caught but one. Have I not led the way to all this increase of your power on earth ? Have I not invented soft names for folly, and gentle names for sin ; and hell and damnation are no longer named to ears polite ? See what my example is, and how far my influence extends ! The poet has weeded all gross words from his strain, steeped loose and licentious thoughts in honey, and the poison is swallowed for its sweetness. The lover no longer speaks the overflowing language of his affection ; he comes full of courtly observances, fulfils all the rules of established etiquette, and with the words of purity and innocence on his tongue, make his way more readily with those who compound in chaste speech for their inclination to folly. Have we not extended the reign of woman over the heart of man a round score of years of her life ? Think you that we let youth and beauty fail us, when nature

bids us be sober and sedate? Look upon the humble priestess of Fashion before you—seem I not of twenty years or so; and have I not the bloom of youth on my cheek, the beam of health in my eyes, a fresh and curling luxuriance of locks, and a well-proportioned and fair body? And could this miracle have been wrought by the dull intellects of our grand-dams? They had not discovered how to conceal the ravages of time—when they were old they looked old; man has found out many inventions, but woman more, and all her discoveries regard her own power and person. Behold what I am, and admire the art which has conquered nature!” The Spirit on the throne smiled grimly, as he beheld the transformed figure before him. For a ripe and rosie maiden, in the first flush of youth, and shining in the glory of the richest fashion, there stood before him a wrinkled beldame, of seventy years, with a few gray hairs straying over her withered cheeks, eyes as dull as those of a dead fish, and a form haggard and ill-shaped.

She laughed aloud, and said, “Behold the form and the beauty which lead fashion, and which the wise world worships. See how little of nature goes to obtain man’s admiration; and how prettily deformity and wrinkled old age may be dished out for the delight of that dainty wretch, called man.

And think not that I wrought by charm and spell ;
that would remove the marvel. A handful of
dead men's hair, a little patching, padding, and
paint, and the thing is done." And throwing her
jewelled robe around her, and resuming her
scented curls, she took her seat, amid the envy
and admiration of her companions.

" And shall she have all the praise ? " said a
young maiden, advancing towards the throne ;
" shall she have all the praise, who with the
world's wealth in her lap contrives to keep the
world's admiration ? To seek by delicious wines
and soft couches, and the sound of sweet instru-
ments, and hot late suppers, to delude man to
continue his admiration far into life, seems little.
But what say ye of her, who with no other attrac-
tion, save youth, life, a laughing lip, and two gray
eyes, has contrived to woo and win the sedatest
and the wisest ? See a gown of homespun gray,
my locks curling in their own negligence, a cheek
with something of a rose, and a chin with a dim-
ple, and two hands white indeed with washing
amid snowy curds, but unacquainted with scents
and washes, who would think that I could make
conquests compared to her, with her rings and
her rubies, her robes of silk, and her couches
of down ? Yet seven priests, and threescore
shepherds, are worthy of conquering ; and I have

accomplished that, simple and unadorned as I am."

"Thou hast done well, my child," said the Spirit, with a smile of affection, stretching out his hand, and smoothing down the glossy abundance of her locks; "thou hast done well with little means, and I honour thee for it. Go, while thy cheeks have the glow of nature, and in thine eyes is the light of love, for youth and beauty have ever had their sway with mankind. Go, and with thy charms entice the wise, mislead the devout, and sink the sanctified in sin. Sow dissensions between husband and wife; and if thou canst not pollute the pure couch of marriage, sow it with thorns and nettles. Go, and spread thy conquests among the mountains and the vales, bring upon youth sore anguish, rottenness, despair, and death; but spare my priests. Wherefore shouldst thou waste thy strength on my surest servants?" And passing his hand over her head, face, and shoulder, as he spoke, her hair seemed sown with precious stones, her face got a ruddier and more seductive bloom, and her rustic gown became a velvet robe, sparkling from the neck to the knee with rubies. With a proud glance and conscious step she returned to her seat, and every eye was glanced upon her, as she composed her locks and adjusted her robe.

Then Sir James saw a youth step forward from the circle with a harp in his hand, and a figured mantle thrown, with studied negligence, over his left shoulder, leaving the right arm free. He stopt not till he stood by the throne, and thus he addressed the Spirit, “ What have these women done, and that gray-headed old man, that they should be rewarded thus with praise and with honours? What marvels could a tongue, less than inspired, work in your favour? and what conquests over purity and virtue could be achieved by a withered beldame and a blowzy quean, with locks like rushes. The wonders which they imagine they have wrought were achieved by one more modest by nature, and who is too proud to dress himself even in the glory of his own achievements. But modest pride would cease to be virtue, were I silent when others claim the praise of my deeds, and other brows wear the bays which my labours have so surely won.” And he paused, and looked round, gave the strings of his harp one touch with his hand, and ere the sound died away, he thus continued—

“ And who art thou? I imagine I hear some tongues inquiring. I answer, in the words of one who will on some future day use them gloriously himself—

“ Not to know me, argues thyself unknown.”

I am he who purified the strains of my country of their grossness and their sensual language, and who dressed the merry muse in the garb of propriety and decorum. I am he who gave to licentiousness modest looks, pure speech, and who winnowed away the chaff and the offal from lyrical love-making. I am he who sugared over the asp, sweetened the poisoned cup, and strewed the ways of perdition with flowers and sweet herbs. In me will you find no gross words, but such as become a lady's lips, I have put lewd thoughts in a saintly garb, and all men, and all women, admire and sing—and sing and admire. You may well imagine, then, that I heard others claim the merit of my works with something like anger. Can the words or the example of common life work changes like the words of inspiration? My songs have been published to the world in the sweetest of all ways, by lady's lips, and they are heard in every hall and city, and their infection is felt in the veins of the young, and in the blood of the old. From you, therefore, I claim the honour which belongs to the fortunate poet whose works aid and sustain the frame of your government, and who, in no vulgar spirit, has sought to melt down the snows of chastity which guarded the purity of woman." And he again passed his hand over the

strings of his harp, and they sent forth a sweet and a lascivious sound.

“ My inspired son,” said the Spirit, “ think not that I am insensible to merit such as thine, or that I have any desire of allowing others to carry away the honour which thou hast so fairly won. Ah ! the loose lyrics of the land were unfit for the purpose for which they were written ; for purity was startled by the grossness of the language, and modesty alarmed by the shamelessness of the thoughts. But thou tookest the licentious muse, and taught her the art which she had never learned, how to make her lewd ideas welcome to the world, and acceptable to the meek and the modest. Then did she lift up her voice and sing, and lords and ladies listened, my empire was extended, and many a pretty lady was warbled out of her virtue. Go, therefore, my inspired son, kindle again the lewd lights of thy fancy, so pure and so bright that men will follow them as light from heaven, nor will they know that they are in the way to perdition till they are charmed into the yawning pit.” And the poet retired in delight.

Now, there stood before the throne one clothed in scarlet, with a plume in his hat, and a sword by his side, and he laid his hand on the hilt, and said, “ what has a proud and a perfumed woman, a smooth and wily counsellor, or a warm and liber-

tine poet, done for thy empire in comparison with me? They have, indeed, accomplished, by the slow, and inch by inch process of contamination and deceit, the ruin of a few of the weakest and most defenceless of creation; but while they planned the ruin of one, I accomplished that of thousands. By no wily and difficult stratagem did I work the good work, but with banner displayed, and by sound of trumpet, did I advance, and face to face did I meet them, hip and thigh I smote them, blood flowed like water, and there was much slaughter, and a great spoil. Let not, therefore, acts such as mine, seem less meritorious in thy eyes than the deeds of others. How many armies have I destroyed, how many cities have I stormed and sacked, how many widows have I made, and how many orphans! But I lifted not my hand against the church, and the church blessed me, and with her prayers enabled me to prosper in all my undertakings." And he looked round, claiming applause, and obtained it.

"My brave son," said the Spirit, "I love thee, and I love all my children; they serve me all after their own way; whoso serves me with most zeal and success, serves me best. Thou hast indeed fought bravely and prudently, and welcome unto me is the sight of human blood. I love to behold widows whom the sword has made, and the cry of the

orphan is unto me as the sweetest music. Thy wisest deed was that of sparing the priests. In sparing them thou didst spare my firmest servants, for they have maintained, these thousand years, impostures upon the earth; they have said unto ignorance thou art our chosen friend, and unto thick darkness abide in the land. I thank thee, therefore, for that act of mercy, for, without the false church, I know not what would become of me. Go, therefore, my son, smite, kill, and destroy; shake down towers, raze up cities, pass the plough and harrow over the dwellings of men, but spare, O spare, my servants the priests." And the Soldier strode away with such an air, that all gazed, and grew envious of the distinction which he had obtained. An old woman advanced, much worn with years, and leaning on a staff. "I marvel much, Lucifer," she said, "that you should bestow all your admiration on creatures such as those whom you have just spoken to, while more constant and faithful servants must come halting, and seek for it. Ah! you have forgot how many good deeds I have done for you, and how many victims I have sent to the abodes of darkness and dismay. What is it to collect an hundred thousand scoundrels together, and direct them to shoot, and stab, and destroy? They are the filth and feculence of the land, and hell was sure of

them without seeking ; they were sufficiently wicked to go there of free will. And what merit is there, Lucifer, in kindling up young blood with wicked songs, or immodest conversations ? Youth will go gaily to perdition without being led by idle verse, and the earth will be repeopled and replenished in spite of the godly, and without the aid of courtly procuresses. No, no ; there is little merit in all that, I trow. Has any one of them crept as a canker-worm between the bud and the leaf ? has any one of them glided in like an infection between the tender bark and the tree ? has any one of them poisoned the milky ear of corn in the shot blade ? No, no ; none of them, I trow. But how many happy families have I made miserable ? how many fire-sides have I robbed of gladness and joy ? It is easy to lead captive the weak and unresisting, but how dangerous and how hard it is to conquer the strong, and mislead the virtuous, and what a merit it is to make subjects for hell out of those ripe for heaven." And she retired to her seat, nor heeded the greeting with which the Spirit greeted her.

" What would my fair son ? " said Lucifer, to a meek and sedate old man, who came slowly forward, and lifting his eyes slowly from the ground, fixed them on the throne, as one who was diffident and afraid, " what would my fair son ? Hast thou ought to ask of me ? speak thy wish, and have it."

“ Truly, Sir,” said the man, “ I am but an humble priest in thy sight, though in the sight of the profane world I am one who bears some small rule, and to whose wish the kings of the earth yield. They know, though I am one of the meekest of men, that my power is great, and merely by way of experiment I have given them an example; dethroned a king or two, and cursed and thrown out from the bosom of God a whole people. It is true, I have been a most mild and lenient representative of the meekest Spirit that ever appeared on the earth; I have not burned more than twenty thousand men, women, and children, in slow fires; nor have I loosed the sword of terror more than thrice, and it was satisfied with the blood of a million of men; yet with all my meekness and moderation, my children are rebelling against me. They threaten to pull down my power, to break the images of my thirteen thousand saints to pieces, to stop my profitable traffic in indulgences, to prevent me from lifting another penny at the lucrative toll-bar of purgatory; and to accomplish all this, they are opening the book of the Saviour and the Apostles to the people; and woe to us, and our empire, when the people read the Scripture for themselves. What then shall I do? Wilt thou tell me, Lucifer? Thou knowest I have been thy faithful servant for threescore years.

I have burnt, slain, destroyed, and spared not ; to thy honour have I made canonized saints out of murderers and adulterers, cast their figures in silver and gold, and caused men to fall down and worship them. What shall I do, I pray thee, for I see the minds of men are ripe for revolution, and thirsting for knowledge ? What shall I do to maintain my power, I beseech thee ? ” Dark as a December night the Spirit waxed, the hair of his head became agitated, the lightning which enclosed it streamed brighter and brighter, and showed the agony which shook all his limbs. He snatched up his sword, and he snatched up his pen, and glanced his eye fiercely from side to side.

CHAPTER V.

The lark looks gladsome to the east,
And by the thistle's side
Shakes off the night-dew from his wings—
Fye, Cummers, let us ride.
Look to yon line of silver light,
Thrown on the eastern snow,
At every glance it glows more bright—
Fye, Cummers, let us go.

OLD BALLAD.

“ WITH this in my right hand, and with this in my left,” exclaimed the Evil Spirit, “ I can fear no change which may befall. With one I can shed fear and dread among the nations; and with the other I can sow doubt, perplexity, and disunion. Cheer up, therefore, my sincerest son, and let not the signs of reformation dismay you. See you not that reform itself will bring into action all the angry and evil passions of mankind, that every new advocate will come with his fresh system of devotion, and that between the figurative language and literal meaning of Scripture, lies the debateable land, in which sect will array itself against sect, and blood will be profusely spilt?”

“ All this,” replied the Priest, “ I foresee ; and it is not because there will be no end to strife and debate that I make my lamentation. But the beautiful fabric which superstition has reared amid the general darkness, will be shaken to its foundations ; the seven thousand saints, whom we teach the world to worship, will be saints no longer ; the miracles which we work will be no more believed ; religion, by speaking in a language which all men understand, will cease to be a mystery ; and the priests will fall into a low and humble estate, and be obliged to labour for the welfare of other men’s souls, instead of toiling for their own aggrandizement ? O Lucifer, son of the morning ! thy own fall was not more terrible than ours will be. What will become of our holy crosses, our holy copes, our holy water, our holy wells, our holy bones, our holy stones, our holy mitres, our holy crooks, our holy —— ”

Loud laughed Lucifer, and exclaimed, “ For the love of the pit stay thee, Priest, else day will dawn before thou namest all thy holy tricks and holy tools. What will become of the holy nuns, thinkest thou, who, under pretence of vowing their charms to heaven, carried them to a nunnery, and dedicated them to my jolly friends, the priests ? Ah ! my sorrowful friend, thy cause for lamentation, I confess, is not small ; it is indeed a passing

pleasant thing to see a fair dame coming tripping with her little secret of sin to reveal to the jolly friar, to see the soft couches and the slumbering cells, and to hear the thousand vows of self denial, which are daily made, and hourly broken. But all things must have an end, and the sunshine of priestcraft must set at last."

" What will become of us then ? " exclaimed the Priest ; " for with these holy hands we cannot work. Who will purchase our benedictions, who will buy our absolutions, and who will pay a penny for our dispensations ? Men will commit sin without sanction, and do murder without our authority. Ah ! the blessed days of darkness will be gone, and in this light which is dawning the church will not be able to pick up an honest penny." " Content thee, Priest, content thee," said Satan ; " thinkest thou that I shall fail to reap my yearly harvest of human souls, because Popery's sickle is broken. No, no : this very knowledge, which thy ignorance dreads, will aid me in peopling hell—new varieties of sin will come with it into the world ; the press, like a human voice, will call from side to side of the whole earth, and all manner of wild, and strange, and evil opinions, will be breathed over the world, when Knowledge opens the lips of Ignorance."

" All this may be true," exclaimed the Priest ;

“ but when will the world contain such a vast and glorious fabric of deceit and imposture as we have been raising these thousand and odd years ? Only think with what skill it was planned, and with what consummate wisdom it was perfected. On the simple religion and meek morality of Jesus what a splendid worship we have raised, and how many new gods have we pressed into the service ; we bribe the rich and the powerful with hopes of becoming deities, and when we sweep along the way with our damasked robes upon us, and our golden sandals lifted from the dust, in a chariot with silver wheels, we have the art to make men believe that we are the representatives of the meek and lowly Saviour. It wrings my heart to think that all this must fall to pieces, and that fraud, and trick, and holy rougery, must pass into less accomplished hands.”

“ Weep and wail, weep and wail, Priest,” said Lucifer, with a smile, “ but it is neither in your power nor in mine to withstand the change which your wisdom fears. Often did I say that you depended on man’s credulity too far, miracle after miracle did he not swallow like sweet milk, deceit after deceit did he not drink up, and gape for more ; on your relics did he not look with awe, and did he not pay you heavily for your dispensations, and rain gold for your absolutions ? yet still

you went on heaping fraud on fraud, till he found that the church, when it had devoured his substance, refused to pass his body and soul through the toll-bar of purgatory, and he began to look about for a cheaper faith, for a less merciless belief, and lo ! he has found both. I tell thee, priest, I preached up humility and moderation, but I forgot that thou wert a true son of the church ; when did a priest relax his gripe ? Thou art alone to blame for all this growing change, the meanest imp in my dominions will mock thee, and scorn thee for a presumptuous fool."

The Priest grew dark with anger where he stood, and he exclaimed, " By Becket's bones, I swear, thou shalt no longer be served by me. Is this the thanks I am to receive for supporting the doctrine of darkness against that of light ? False Spirit, I despise thee, and with one half hour of repentance shall I make up my peace with the ministers of light, and become one of thy bitterest enemies. This reforming light shall I foster and nourish, and into the darkest nook of perdition shall I pour the radiance of heaven, and make the presence of glory from above increase the pangs of thy punishment."

" Fair Son," said Lucifer, mildly, " I have done nothing to merit thy wrath, and I like the spirit with which thou hast vindicated the sentence which

one who lives in light has passed upon thee. Knowest thou not that thou art from this time forward withdrawn from the cares of the world; and sent with thy wisdom to the nether realms, where thou wilt find a numerous community of thy own kind engaged in anxious speculations upon the qualities of heat, and inquests upon the properties of ever-during fire? Go, join thy companions." He spoke, and the priest was visible for a moment, as a bubble is on the ocean stream, and then he was gone for ever.

" Come hither, my profound friend," said Lucifer, to a little man with a face sharp, sour, suspicious, and sarcastic, who went forward at the summons, " Seest thou these two instruments, one is of thrice-tried steel, the other is plucked from the wing of the bird of perdition; the steel will sheer asunder whatever it strikes, and the pen, dipt in the lake of darkness, will make truth seem falsehood, and blacken the purest reputation which the sun shines on? Which wilt thou have? my fair son, well and worthily wilt thou wield either, so make thy choice."

The eyes of the man sparkled with joy, and he held out his hand, and said, " The choice is soon made. Thou art not for me, thou sharp and mortal weapon, it requires a strong hand to wield thee, a dauntless heart to use thee, and toil of body

more than I covet, to grow and become great by thy means. Away, therefore, to the hand of some wild and romantic fool who knows not how to strike his foe safely, and who glories in meeting his enemy face to face. But come to me, thou little instrument, thy wounds will be as incurable as those of the sharpest sword, and with thee I can sit at my ease, and smite and destroy, from the centre of the world to its circumference. Thy ink shall be more venomous than the tongue of the asp, and whatsoever thou touchest shall surely die. On virtue and on worth wilt thou amply avenge me, honesty shalt thou encircle with doubt, and chastity with suspicion. The king shall not wear his crown in happiness, because of thee; his chief counsellors thou shalt cause to tremble, and his mighty captains thou shalt fill with fear. Neither shall the poet be reverenced, since thou wilt cast scorn and derision upon his strain. Thou shalt stir up the multitude against their rulers, and make them doubt all, and believe nothing. Thou shalt be as a blight upon the buds of genius, and as a canker-worm to its green leaf."

"Enough! Enough!" cried Lucifer, "fair son, thou art the worthiest of all my children. The world is weary of the monstrous wickedness of my other servants, they are dull of invention, their impostures are easily detected, and their schemes rea-

dily eluded. Of imaginary miracles, of silent gods, and all the exploded trickery of priestcraft, mankind are weary. Of bloodshed, too, and of policy still more murderous, they are aware, and have formed laws, and laid down maxims, to withstand the one, and disappoint the other. But who shall arrest the march of this new instrument of torture and destruction? This infernal engine, which shall advance invisibly over the earth, and shake down towers, and lay cities desolate? In a happy hour it was invented, under the pretence of introducing knowledge and the glorious productions of human genius; it comes with woe and sorrow to man, invades domestic privacies, opens up the tomb, and scatters men's ashes on the wind, and gives the world a foretaste of hell."

"Ah! illustrious Sir," said Lucifer's new recruit, holding up the pen between his eye and the light, "you have spoken prophetically of this little weapon. With this shall dullness avenge itself on genius, with this shall I scatter sedition in states, and the seeds of sorrow in families. The historian shall not tell the truth with impunity, the poet shall not sing his song of pleasantness or pathos without a bitter pang, and he who works for the welfare of his country, and the good of the human race, shall do so at his peril, for I will cast scorn upon his actions, and make

him feel that he may not be as a god without suffering and pain."

"I see, I see," exclaimed Lucifer, "it is a worthy weapon. The invention of gunpowder I thought admirable, since it enabled the coward to avenge himself without fear, and brought weakness and strength to an equality. Navigation, too, I marvelled at, since it wafted over unfathomable seas, with the wings of the wind, all manner of new vices, and allowed no nation to have a monopoly of iniquity. Priestcraft, also, I deemed very worthy, since it patronized darkness, deceit, imposture, fraud, and made gods of all manner of materials. But what are all these to the powers of this simple little weapon? with it shall my kingdom be established on earth, with it shall a dominion be made over the minds of men; false opinions, false history, false poetry, false taste, false religion, all shall be maintained, and Lucifer shall arise again the son of the morning, and shed a light, all his own, over the world."

A shout, like that of a multitude of voices, when some demagogue of the hour utters his treason, now rose into the air, and many a hand was waved, and many a head nodded in joy of this new assurance.

"So this is all the use which the wicked make of knowledge," said Sir James; "alas! that

learning, which is as balm to the human heart, should be turned into gall and poison." "Think not as the evil think," answered Sir Michael, "but by their words be taught wisdom, and by their example be warned. What has been said will surely come to pass, and the evil which has been described will afflict the world. But lament not therefore that the world has escaped from darkness and error by means of this sun-burst of knowledge, for surely the gain will be so great that the loss shall not be reckoned. See ye not the gladness and glory which it can bring to mankind. The genius which heaven sends for man's delight and instruction shall no longer remain hidden like a diamond in the mine, or a gem in the bottom of the ocean, but shall shine forth with an useful lustre, and fill all the lands with its glory. Knowledge will lend a tongue to genius; inspiration shall no more be mute, and the nations shall vie one with another in the renown which the mind's productions bring, and honourable ambition will thus find a vent for its aspirations. Nay, even in the license, and the dangerous freedom which we heard, that they who use the pen will enjoy, there is cause for rejoicing, inasmuch as the press, like a waste-pipe, will carry off all the foaming and over-boiling portion of the living element; and a fierce and intractable intellect, when it has emptied

itself, will be still and satisfied for a time. But see, there rises one who seems ill pleased with the future aspect which the world is doomed to wear; listen to his complaint, it must be curious and instructive."

As Sir Michael spoke, there came forward an old man, his head was venerable with gray hairs, he was clad in a long loose coat, girdled with a leathern girdle, and bore a staff worn smooth as horn by frequent use in his right hand. He stood before Satan, and lifting up his staff, said, "Seest thou this piece of ancient wood? it has wrought more wonders in behalf of thy kingdom than the fairest feather that man ever plucked from the wing of a wild goose. In the ancient of days this piece of wood, small and worm-eaten as it now seems, was a god whom the heathens worshipped; for a cunning man fashioned it with skill, and a wily priest placed it in his temple, and by an art which we would willingly know, made it utter false prophecies, declare war, raze cities, and be an oracle to mankind. But the world waxed weary in listening to wooden gods, and they were then thrown from their high places, and consumed with fire, for a new worship had sprung up; simple, mild, and reasonable, and men were charmed with it for a time. But this lasted not long. The new religion was laborious in its observances; strict, regular and

unprofitable ; the priests liked it not, and under pretence of love to the Divine Founder, and his illustrious companions, they collected their relics, they disinterred their bones, they caused their forms to be made in brass and in gold, and then fell down and worshipped them. The wooden god of which I spoke then became a crucifix, and the crucifix spake, and distilled dews of blood, and with a prompting priest behind it, counselled kings, admonished nations, and gave its tens of thousands to the sword.

“ Thus for many centuries did this piece of glorious wood wage a war in thy behalf ; now listen till I tell thee of its last transformation. On the city of Florence there fell a plague, and the plague destroyed all the firstborn, and the priests made a procession, and the people a pilgrimage, and with many vows and entreaties brought the quiet and harmless cross to intercede with God, and spare the people. And the cross heard them not, and the people continued to die ; and there came a pilgrim, saying, “ This is not the true cross, for it is at Rome.” And another Pilgrim exclaimed, “ It cannot be the true cross for it is at Rouen.” And a third said, “ Wherefore may it not be the true cross, seeing that it may be multiplied by a miracle.” And one cried with a loud voice, “ Were it the true cross it would be merciful ; therefore

pluck it up from its niche, and cast it into the fire, and consume it; and the people did so, and it blazed and sparkled in the fire, and they all shouted a false cross, a false cross.

“And I saw the worthy relic which had wrought such wonders in thy cause consuming with fire, and I plucked it forth, and from it I fashioned this enchanted staff, and so continued the power which it had of old over the people. Look ye all at it. Seems it not a piece of ordinary wood, but, O! the deeds which it has achieved would make a long and marvellous history? Listen. I saw a fair ship, her sails were filled with a fair wind, her merry men were on board, and all her streamers on, and there were princes and proud ones on her deck, and ladies with swan white necks; ye never beheld such beauty. I looked till I could look no longer, and I lifted my staff, and as I lifted it the ship seemed rising like a sea-bird from the waves; I sank it and the fair ship sank; I heard the scream of the perishing creatures, and next morning saw their bodies laid orderly upon the beach, three hundred and three score I counted, and could count no farther for laughing.”

The old man stood silent for a moment or two, to enjoy the titter of pleasure which ran from lip to lip of his audience, and thus he continued,

“Another time I looked, and I saw on a sweet summer evening a meek and lovely pair, seated under the shade of a hawthorn; the stars shone brightly over them as if conscious of their love; the brook at their feet glided gladsomely by, and its murmur seemed a song of delight, for their very shadows on the stream were lovely, the air was filled with balm, and there was not a sound on earth half so sweet as their mingled vows and half uttered words. And I looked, and I remembered that time had never bestowed such delicious moments on me, and I threw a spell into the air, and he fell off from truth, and she fell off from purity, and their love was changed to bitterness, and their vows to reproaches, and when I saw the sod laid green on their early graves, I said to my staff, thy ancient cunning has abated nought, and thy virtue is fit to sustain our master’s empire.”

And an old woman sighed, “Ah! thy staff is a glorious instrument, and did thee a noble service.”

The old man raised up his charmed staff and continued, “Aye it is a staff of singular virtue, and the deeds it has done would grace an heroic song. Once on a time when the rulers of the land were resolved to purify the earth, and slay all men whose knowledge surpassed their own, my staff and I got into trouble. And they took me and bound me with iron bands, and put me in a dun-

geon, and placing my staff beside me, said, “Let it feed thee and fetch thee drink.” And on the third night when my lips were parched, and hunger was upon me, my blessed staff charmed me dainties and drink from my persecutors table. The very viands to which they stretched their hands vanished as they gazed on them, and the wine forsook the cup as it rose to the lip, and came to cheer me in my dungeon. And when they found that I neither hungered, nor was thirsty, they said, ‘this man is a warlock, and shall assuredly die.’

“ So they took me from my dungeon and tied me to a stake, put dried wood around me, and putting my staff in my hand, said, “ Let the evil spirit which thou servest deliver thee from the flame, and take thee out of our hands. And when they tried to kindle the pile, there arose a thick and suffocating smoke, which rolled round them and round them, and they could not live amid the choking vapour, but fled from the place. And I unbound myself and departed, singing a new song of rejoicing, and blessing the magic staff which wrought my deliverance. Now, Lucifer, therefore, I pray thee, scorn not, nor cast away the useful instruments which have sustained thy kingdom ; prize not before them new inventions, which may promise mighty deeds, yet fail in the performance.”

And Lucifer said, “ I reverence thy staff and thee, and well I know the actions it has wrought of old in support of false gods and false religion. But every period of time has its own inventions, and the day is at hand when spell and charm shall be laid aside, and my kingdom be peopled by the abuse of knowledge, and fashion and refinement shall give me many of their followers. The time when men believed every thing, will be followed by the time when men shall believe nothing; yet shall they not be safer from my power, nor surer of salvation. For I tell thee surely, that wisdom herself is as much my friend as folly.”

And there came from the crowd one who was lame, a woman whose hair floated on the night-air like eagles wings, whose nails were like birds claws, and who carried something in her hand which seemed an adder; yet it moved not; she looked upon it, and said, “ This is but a simple wand, and never was a god nor a talking-cross, and yet it has wrought some marvels in its time; listen, and judge. It was on a harvest night, when I had shaken all the ripe corn on the hills and holms of the border, and let foxes among the lambs on the mountains of Moffatdale, that I sat down to rest me upon a murderer’s grave at the foot of Carmaudie mountains. And there flew a raven towards me, bearing a toad

in its mouth ; and when it came over me the toad fell on the grave, and where it fell there sprung up a little willow among the rank grass. And the ground heaved as with life ; and there came a bloody hand from the grave, and plucked the wand, and held it out to me, and I heard a voice, saying, ‘ From a murderer’s blood it is sprung, and pulled by a demon’s hand, it shall work many deeds of darkness.’ I took the little wand, and a wand of merit it has proved to be,” and waving it over her head, she thus went on with her story.

“ I am not one of those who delight in blood-shed and destruction ; no, my pleasure is to sit and check the foolish hopes of man, to see him walking in glory and joy, imagining the gladsome things which are to befall him, and then dash the cup away from the lip, and deliver him up to sadness of heart, sore perplexity, the pang of despised love, and the agony of disappointed hope ! Ah these are little delights, you will think, unworthy of ambition ; but I tell ye, my fellow-mortals, the cup of human misery is filled with many drops, and the sum of human affliction is like the full bushel, composed of many grains. I have ever seen that man has fortitude for a great calamity, an endurance which is of heaven or some hotter place, which enables him to brave misfortune when it

comes in a flood ; but try him with a succession of petty vexations: place him under the dropping-eaves of daily sorrow, and let vexation shed its minute drops upon him, and, aha ! he will shrink, he will pine, he will wither away, and fill an untimely grave. I know human nature.”

Lucifer lent an attentive ear to the hag’s harangue ; she held up her wand, and went on :

“ The first time I tried thy might was at a bridal ; there rode the bridegroom, and there rode the bride ; ye never beheld such beauty and such bravery. Old men blessed her as she passed, old women forgot their gray hairs, and the young men of the land stood dumb with awe, as she swept swiftly past, bright and lovely as a sunbeam. Up she went to the altar. I wish you had seen her ; the priest stood and could hardly do the work of God, and the blush which spread over her cheek and bosom had more of heaven than has the hue of a summer’s morn. Bonnie as a new wakened star, and straight as the ray of its light, she went into the church ; but brown as a berry and crooked and withered she came out. I had held up my wand, I had thrown my spell upon her, and she became the world’s wonder, and pined away, and ere that day twelvemonth I pulled the gowans from her grave. Call ye that nought ?

“ The second time that I tried the merits of my

wand was at a black burial. The Spirit of God had walked out of a man, and left a cold and unwholesome corse to be dished out in lily-white linen for a feast to the parish worms. He was one who had worn a mitre, and when he died ten thousand people laughed, and danced, and cried out, ‘He who oppressed us has departed in sorrow; he who plundered the poor has gone to the grave without a penny in his pocket.’ I saw the well-plumed hearse, the weeping kindred, the mourning friends; and I went nigh, and heard the fresh spadeful of earth sound hollow on the coffin-lid. I looked, and I saw inward joy cloaked by outward sorrow, in the looks of the chief mourners, and a smile of gladness at the heart where sadness should have been. As they mounted their steeds to be gone to divide the gold and the inheritance, I waved my wand, and threw a spell of contention into the air. Away they spurred homewards, and I saw a smoke arise from their horses flanks, like mist from a meadow in the morning sun. Next I saw their steeds come foaming to the gate—five steeds were there, and two riders; one lay with his neckbone broken, another floated down the flooded river, and of five bold brethren two alone came home to divide the ill-gotten gain. Call ye that nothing?

“The third time that I used my virtuous wand

was on a summer Sunday morning. At the sound of a church bell a little village and a little valley poured out to the house of God their devout and well-dressed population. I think I see them now! There came the old—their gray hairs glancing in the sun, and the silver-clasped Bibles in their hands—there followed the young: the glances of their bright eyes sobered down, their step more staid, and their thoughts more holy; and there stood the church, amid its ranks of gravestones, over which the living devoutly walked. I almost grew holy while I beheld them. But stay a little. Whom saw I coming towards the church door but a vain mother, with her eighteen sons behind her. There she moved, with a toss of her head, and a glance of her eye, as much as if she said, ‘Barren trees should be cut down, and thrown into the fire; saw ye ever such a bonnie bairntime as mine?’ And there walked her children, the eldest hindmost, and the youngest at her back, their bright eyes filled brimful with the light of joy to behold their mother glad, and their fair locks dancing in the sun. They had silver clasps in their shoon. I found the milkiness of my nature rising against my resolution, so I closed my eyes, threw my spell into the air, waved my wand, and a glad mother, with eighteen fair sons, went into the church, but a sorrowful mother came

out. I hear her shrieks yet, and see the young fair-haired creature carried lifeless along. My heart grew soft as I gazed, and I vowed a vow, never to take life but pine the body ; and that vow I have kept, and mickle fun have I had with it. Ye shall hear.

“ There lived at our town end a careful and prudent man, who scorned so much the magnificence of life, that he was clad in coarse and patched apparel ; who despised its costly luxuries so freely, that he lived upon black bread and water ; his couch was hard and homely ; and he lighted a little lamp, and spent till midnight in devotion. Now the god which he worshipped was not one of those shadowy essences which dwell in the clouds, and appear to our belief, but never to our eye ; nor was it one of those creatures made of lilies and roses, and named woman, who, while the season of loveliness lasts, may be called divinities, seeing that men worship them, and bow to them, and wander at night under their chamber windows, and render them incense in song, with deep vows, and all manner of humility. But it was good honest gold which he worshipped, stamped with a man’s head, and proven in the hands of a sworn assayist to be standard and statute gold. I saw him, as he sat with his yellow divinities before him, his little lamp threw a twinkling

lustre upon them, and his eye glistened with delight as he exclaimed, ‘ An hundred thousand, and all full weight, nor one of them cracked within the ring.’

“ And I waved my wand, and threw a spell into the air, and it seemed to him that his doors were forced, that strong men came upon him, he heard the departing chink of his beloved gold, and he almost died with despair. And when the noise ceased he looked, and lo and behold his glorious gold was gone, and there he saw in its stead a knife, a halter, and a cup of poison ! And he took them up by turns, and said, ‘ My heart is carried away with my blessed gold, and I want courage to escape from this miserable world. Thou halter, I will not use thee, for thou wilt be useful to disappointed ambition ; thou weapon of steel, I shall not touch thee ; I leave thee to the minion of the court, who lives on smiles and dies on a frown ; nor will I drain thee, thou tempting cup ; what would then become of creatures crossed in love, of poor souls pinched with the marriage fetters, of jealousy and despair : I leave you to them, for the inquest summoned on my body would lick up my little wealth ; so I shall die the ordinary way, as if nought ailed me, to save expense.’ When I heard him talk thus my heart was touched, I turned my wand the other way, and called my

spell from the air ; and the gold glittered again in the miser's eye, he smiled, and spent four-pence, in the vastness of his joy."

" Cummer, Cummer, thou wilt consume this glorious evening with the history of thy deeds, as if no one had done an action worthy of being blazoned save thyself," said another Crone. " Look at me ! I was not always a creature fourscore years old, troubled with a sore cough, my eyes as if they were lined with red plush, my teeth dropped out and perished to a single stump, lame of a foot, and halting on a crutch. There was a time when my eyes were bright, my locks black, and my limbs young and nimble, and then, Cummers, who was like me in the wide west country ? Ah ! I was not one of those spiritless creatures who waylay domestic happiness at home, and like a hawk over a brood of chickens, or an eagle in a dovecote, flutter merry souls at a bridal, and made the mother scream over her perishing babes. No, no : I threw my spell into the air, and away I went with my merry Cummers to see what bonnie France had provided for us. I saw the sea glancing and glimmering below us, and then the gilded spires of laughing Rouen ; I heard the sound of the song and the dance, and smelt the red wine, and the fragrance of a feast. There, in the great cathedral, fourscore monks sat down

to a feast. I tell ye what, Cummers—I have feasted with kings, and other prime ones of the earth, but the feast of monks transcends them all. The dainties and the fatness of the earth are there, their grace is marvellous brief, and their feasting wondrous long, and it would astonish ye to see how much those godly men will eat ; but the blessing of the saints is with them, and they surpass all men in that, as much as they do in holiness.

“ Seven of us sat perched like cormorants on the heads of seven abbots cut in stone, and when the Bishop of Rouen closed his eyes, and clasped his hands for the blessing, down we dropped with a scream, and on the banquet we fell, for the passage of the sea had sharpened our appetite. The choicest viands disappeared—the best wine followed. The Bishop shouted out, ‘ The Fiends are feasting with us !—let us strive with the wide throats of perdition.’ And well and worthily he did his devoir that night, marched deep into the roast, consumed the broiled ; took up a pullet, covered with barn-door fatness, and laid it down a skeleton ; and, finally, he drenched the whole in a flood of wine, which would have floated three geese. Cummers, I advise ye never to enter into competition with a priest—in my youthful days I did it ; I won the victory, it is true, but it was dearly bought, for as I mounted the night-

wind I found myself giddy, and when the day dawned I was on a mountain top, within sight of the pole, and three weary nights did I plod soberly back. I warn ye against fellowship with priests—a word to the wise is enough.

“ My next adventure, Cummers, was not of a more prosperous nature, but we come to perfection by degrees; the growth of excellence is slow. It was a cold night, not a star was in the sky; there was frost in the air and sometimes a gentle snow came down just by way of powdering our hair, for ye must know five of us were bound on a far adventure, but the steeds we rode on were nimble, and the snow which fell on land and sea, melted as it touched their manes. That night there was a princess to be wedded by torch-light on the borders of Crim Tartary, and we had vowed to be at the dance with the bridegroom, and prove the bridal cheer. And we heard the sound of all manner of music, and alighting amidst their tents joined in the dance with kings and czars. Their faces were wondrous dark, and their noses flat. Among them they had a prime magician, whose knowledge wrought us woe before the morning dawn. The bride was as dark as midnight; but no midnight ever gleamed more gloriously with stars, than she gleamed with gold and precious stones. We danced, we drank, and we sang; a

merry Scottish song we sang, and ye might have tied the bride with a straw, she laughed so wantonly. We rose, and we went; I thought the steed on which I rode was less pleasant to sit on than before; but over the dry land we went, and when we reached the middle of the deep sea, our palfreys vanished from below us, and left us like sea-cormorants to flutter in the foam. The foul magician had undone the spells which held our horses, and sent us homewards on steeds of his own forming. I saw the felon laugh as we vaulted into our saddles. Never mind, 'twas only a splash, and all was over. I have ridden on that Tartarian Magician since, round the lesser Arabia, forded the Red Sea, and given him a tasting of the snows of Siberia. Lord how he snorted and snuffed when I turned him against the north, and spurred him up a mountain three miles perpendicular."

CHAPTER VI.

I smell the morning air and see,
Dim grows the glow-worm's spark;
The sky is waxing bright, and all
Its stars are dull and dark.
He said, and from his foot with song,
Straight heavenward sprung the lark.

SIR James and Sir Michael still stood in the middle of the mound ; before them rose the ruined castle, shining with all its supernatural lights ; and beside them stood the colossal Figure, with the brazen-axe, the fire still spouting from the stroke which he struck, and his dark features stamped with the expression of dignity and scorn, such as the Greek has impressed on his Apollo, or Milton has pictured in the features of his Satan. Before them sat that strange divan, over which the power of evil in human shape presided, receiving a narrative from his servants of the services they had rendered his empire, and the hopes which were entertained of its security, or increase. To those wild revelations Sir James listened with an atten-

tion mingled with awe ; his education, the common belief of mankind, and the current doctrines of divines, had all aided in impressing a supernatural feeling upon him, and what he beheld now was only a visible embodying of the legends, and tales, and traditions, of his early days. Nor was he so far enchain'd by apprehension, as not to be able to compare how closely this sensible revelation of the deeds of the realms of darkness corresponded with the wild poetry, and superhuman legends of his native land, and he felt in his heart the identity of the resemblance.

A woman next came forward and stood before the Evil Spirit, and holding up her right arm, cried, “Behold what I have suffered for thee and thy kingdom. See, from the wrist, my right hand is severed, and whilst others have idle tales to tell of imaginary deeds and visionary acts, there is the proof, the ocular proof that I have suffered in the flesh for thee and thine.” “My fair daughter,” said Lucifer, “who has dared to strike thy white hand from thy body ? the hand that I loved so well, for round, and long, and tapering were the fingers ; a whiter hand was not in all the south countree.” “Ah, and the more was the pity to lose so fair a member,” said the witch, who was young and ripe and rosie, with dark lustrous eyes, and raven-black hair, and shook her curls back over a white

round neck as she spoke, nor was a gentle lisp in her speech any drawback to her beauty. “The more was the pity to lose so fair a member; may the hand rot off that did it, and may the heart that thought the deed, become a dainty bit for the foul dogs that yelp in the pit of perdition. Ye shall judge if my wrath is wrong by my story.

“It was on a midsummer eve, the calamity of invasion and blood had come upon the land, widows were weeping, orphan children were crying through the country, and every house that held two men had a dead corse to cry over. And all this was pleasant unto us, and we held a midnight tryste in the abbey of Saint Michael—a tryste of gladness; many a merry Cummer was there, nor lacked we mickle mirth and pleasant sounds; for there sat a sable bagpiper, where a saint once sat, who gave us music, which made the oldest leg leap like merry sixteen. I wish ye had seen us; ye never beheld such gambols and glee. I wish ye had heard us; ears never listened to such yellochin and din; the old walls through whose aisles but a week before the invaders fires had spouted into the air, a hundred yards perpendicular—the old walls rocked and reeled; the very dead rose with the clamour; a nun who had died in the moment of the birthtime pang, rose with her babe in her bosom; and a dead abbot, thought the hour of was-

sail and glee was arrived, and burst from his cell, six feet by two, and stared upon us as if he had never before seen the like.

“ In the very middle and prime of our mirth; who should come but Sir Thomas Charteris ; his horse bloody with the spur, his sword gory from point to hilt, and bearing from plume to stirrup, the visible tokens of a deadly strife. From the Borders he had come, and from a doubtful and unhappy field. He reined up his steed, gazed in at the shattered oriel, and muttering, ‘ The fire of the foe and the fiends of hell ! ’ snatched a steel axe from his saddle bow, and, starting up in his stirrup, hurled it with all his strength amongst us. I hear yet the sound of the deadly missile ; I see it rushing gleaming over our heads, and I see it strike our musician from his seat, and cut a dent in the wall where ye might bury a baby. All was light as mid-day, when he threw it ; all was dark as midnight when he reined his steed round, and stooping forward, and striking with his spurs, darted off like a flash of fire. Away he went, the nostrils of his steed dilated, its broad bosom spread out, and the dust and gravel spurned high into the air ; and after him, rushed we ; our arms expanded like falcon’s wings, and the fierceness of hell in our hearts. A supernatural swiftness was given to his wearied horse, and it was on the bank of the run-

ning brook, before my right hand had reached it. I seized it by the tail, and the moment that I seized it, the sword of Sir Thomas severed my hand from my body ; I gave a scream, and the steed gave a snort, and away it bounded, with my bonnie white hand hanging to its tail.” And she held up the stump, and her face grew dark as she gazed around, for she saw more of mirth than of sorrow in her companions faces.

“I’ll tell ye, my pretty Cummers,” said the Witch, “ye laugh at my sorrow and my misfortune, and in truth I cannot well weep myself, seeing that out of my mishap I made mickle merriment, and extracted from it gladness and joy. Ah, that is a trick ye would willingly learn, ye wrinkled and hoary beldames ; but when will your skinny lips and sapless shanks, and your jaws which drop out rotten teeth when ye laugh, when will ye cast the cantrips which youth and comeliness can cast over the young and the brave, and the fair descended ? Aye, aye, ye mar the hopes of a poor man’s harvest, charm his churn so that butter cannot come from cream ; make his lambs which are worth one good crown to day, not worth a doit at the fair of Falkirk, and cast witch-knots among the locks of his shrieking wife, and keep her man-child long from the light of the world. Aye, aye, work all these pitiful pranks, and think that Satan’s

kingdom is strengthened. Miserable beldames ! as a glowworm to the sun, so are your contemptible actions compared to mine. Listen."

" On him who cut off my hand I said I was avenged, and thus it befel. Sir Thomas was a strict and a holy knight, and one who feared no foe, either of our world or this. And there came one evening a pilgrim to his gate, who said, ' Rise, Sir Knight, and ride, for in yon glen there is a false knight and a fair lady, and she is weeping, and he is vowing, and she is shrieking, and he is pursuing her from tree to stream, and from bank to brae. Her cries would put spirit in a man of marble. A holy vow, which it would be my perdition to break, withheld my hand from helping her—and a feeble hand it is, Sir Knight,' and he held up a hand withered and weak to the postern light. Sir Thomas spurred his horse into the wild glen, and all the glen echoed with the wailings and the shriekings of a woman. And there he saw a lady as lovely as a summer morn, her garments rent, her locks dishevelled, and her white limbs bleeding from briars and thorns, flying like a frightened hart along the banks of a little stream; while close behind her followed a knight, a drawn sword in his hand, the light of desire in his eyes, and imprecations upon his lips.

" Sir Thomas leaped from his horse, held his

sword between the pursued and the pursuer, and said, ‘ Go, lady, to my tower—yonder gleam its windows ; whilst thou, proud Sir, must answer with thy sword why thou behavest thus rudely.’ And the lady threw herself at his feet and clasped his knees, and every sob she gave it seemed as if her heart would break. The stranger knight uttered not a word, but struck a blow on the helmet of Sir Thomas, which no common mail could have withstood ; but his helmet was secured by a holy charm, and the fire which sprang from the blow sparkled like falling stars. And Sir Thomas struck a blow, and the shield which the false knight held up to guard himself was shorn asunder like rushes, and the weapon bit deep in his shoulder. Fire, and not blood, spouted from the wound—he yelled, and fled, and vanished.

“ Then Sir Thomas raised the lady in his arms, and held her pale face to the moon, for she had fainted, and dropped water on her brow, and her breathing and beauty returned. When she opened her eyes, and beheld the noble face of her deliverer she was sore abashed, and blushes overspread brow and bosom, and she wist not what to say. And he bore her to his tower, and set her on a couch, and ordered maidens to attend her, he served her himself with the white bread and the wine ; and her neck was so exquisitely

white and pure, that it showed the red wine as she drank to her deliverer. Ah! Cummers, this is a sweet and pleasant picture to draw; and think ye I was not avenged? When he took his arm from under her neck as the day dawned, and the sunlight threw its rays in at the window, and looked in the lady's face, think ye she blushed and hid her eyes, and dropped a tear? No, no. I'll tell ye, beldames, what she did: she held up the very stump which I hold up now, and smiled a smile of scorn in his face, and said, ' You took the hand, and you coveted the body.' But why need I prolong a tale of mirth—he is crazed, and I am avenged. Cummers, can any of ye tell a tale like that?"

" Aye, by my faith ! can I, and a far better," said a Witch of middle age, who, advancing from the crowd presented herself before Lucifer, and thus began. " By my looks to-night ye would judge me to be a merry and joyous creature, one who loves the sound of fiddlestrings better than a sermon, and who is no advocate for sorrow and self denial. It is not by my looks I am to be judged. Look at me in the sunshine, among the sons and the daughters of men, and then ye will behold a woman of another stamp—my step is staid, my demeanour demure; when I open my lips there comes forth a shred of a sermon; and

the children still their clamour when I approach, and whisper one to another, when I go by, ‘ That is the holy woman.’ Now all this has no romantic sound with it, and I hear ye whispering one to another, a bonnie way to augment our master’s kingdom, by being devout, and quoting sermons. Stay, and ye shall hear.

“ With the cloak of sanctification about me, heaven on my tongue, and paradise in my looks, I went abroad, and began to work in my mission. And I said unto myself, of sinners Satan is something like secure, let me try how I may best take the feet from the holy, and cast down the chaste from their high stations. And I went about bewailing, with tears and sighs, and sainted words, the lot of the fallen and polluted daughters of men ; and I said unto the lovely and chaste, let us go and admonish these unfortunate creatures, and win them from their ways. So we went, and I took them by the hand, and spoke comfort unto them ; and when they were fed and clothed, they lifted up their voices, and said, ‘ We have sinned, and from mankind we are cast forth, like things leprous ; can we not cleanse us, and return ? ’ And my young companions looked at me, and I said, ‘ Ah ! ye have been giddy girls, hourly workers of evil, sinful in your thoughts, and sinful in your actions ; tell us the sorrowful history of your days ;

it will ease your own hearts, and be to my fair companions as a warning.'

"And they smiled sorrowfully, and told us their tales so meekly and so mildly, so minutely, and with such graphic fidelity, that we were all astonished, and at the end of every new adventure, I shook my head, and said, 'Ah! thou hast been a very naughty girl, and much to blame, but thou hast repented, so the sting is taken from thy licentious story; well, and what next?' And so they went on, piling tale upon tale, story upon story, showing the licentiousness of city and country, the ungovernable passions of the young, the decaying passions of the old; and with such an artless tongue they told them, and in such natural and glowing language, that it ended as I had foreseen, that my companions became converts to sin, and fell from purity and grace, and licentiousness triumphed. Now, did I not say that I had a romantic tale to tell. Who would have thought, that, under the mask of repentance and reformation, that such feats could have been accomplished, but well I knew that tales of seduction, though told in tears, polluted those who heard. So now the daughters of the rich, and the proud, and the noble, are as low as the worst, and grossness triumphs in our streets, and loose desire lifts up her voice in our public places."

“Thou hast done well, daughter,” said Lucifer, looking around him, “and thy invention merits my praise. But what is become of the old vassals of my power? what is become of those aërial and capricious creatures whom godly men call the light-infantry of darkness? Where are the pleasant folk, the good neighbours, to speak in the conciliatory language of old Caledonia, who used to gather round my throne with many a freak and gambol, and run before me the avant couriers of my presence and my power? Are they, too, fallen off from their allegiance; but I shall throw a spell into the air which will bring them, were they converted into trees and stones.” And Lucifer stood up in his place, and rubbed his palms together, and fire flashed out between them; and he took the fire in his hand, and tossed it into the gross darkness, saying, “Evil light, go and gleam and glance in the eyes of those capricious Spirits called Fairies, and lead them through water, fire, bog, and fen, and have them here before I may count a thousand.”

And the evil light, as he threw it from him, sun-dered into four parts, and flew off to the four winds of heaven, and there was silence for some time. And Sir Michael said to Sir James, “See, behold yon dark steed fastened to yon old oak tree, whose trunk is so huge, and whose crooked arms

ascend so high into the air. See how he tosses his head, champs on his bit, and sends a fiery smoke from his opened and incensed nostrils. Look on yon dark steed, I pray thee.” And Sir James looked, and answered, “I see him well though he stands among a thousand steeds, he tosses his head high, and there is a light in his eyes which mark him out for no common machine, fashioned by a spell from a ragwort, or a rugged hind, whose grovelling mind and gross nature witchcraft has power over.” “Thou sayest well,” answered Sir Michael, “and were I to wave my hand, yon dark steed would come in a shape that would make thee start; but let Brunelfin unloose himself from the strong enchantment by his own skill, he ought to have guarded himself from the snare which was laid for him, and which has transformed him as thou seest.”

Ere Sir James could make answer, ten thousand lights came flashing through the darkness; and following the lights there came troop after troop of Fairies and Elves, their long locks dancing on the wind, their golden sandals gleaming on their nimble feet, and their faces glowing so intensely with the rapidity of their motions, that around every head their brows threw a dim halo. Though hurried on in supernatural speed, they came not as other creatures come; they came with dance and

with song, and the music of their aërial minstrelsy hung long in the air, and steeped the whole mount in delicious sound. Lucifer stood up in his seat, and motioned them to silence, and, with a smile, and much sweetness, he thus addressed them : “ Fairest creatures of earth, beings of divine workmanship, spirits who have danced and sung amid the glens and groves of the earth since the sun first shone, and the sea was spread out beneath it, I bid you welcome to my presence. Here are you come, not of constraint, but of free will, dancing like the first rays of the sun in the summer air, singing like the lark when it fills heaven with song as divine as its own ; you are welcome, therefore, coming as you have done in your own peculiar way, and I rejoice in your presence. Tell me now, my pleasant servants, what you have done for your Master’s empire since he appeared on earth last, and say how the work of the lower empire goes on among the sons and daughters of men.” He stopt, and no one answered, the Elves and the Fairies were mute, and motionless as stones of the desert, though anger was flashing in their eyes, and scorn was on their brows. “ Would to God we had Brunelfin here,” said Sir James ; “ cursed be the spell which binds him, and may it dissolve away as snow. He would speak boldly and dauntlessly.” “ Your words have set him free,”

said Sir Michael, with a smile, “look, and wonder.” And Sir James looked, and there he came, Brunelfin, not in haste and with fury in his eyes, but with a slow step, and holding a bridle in his hand. When he appeared, ten thousand Elves and Fairies rose and waved their hands, and, pointing to the throne, seated themselves, and awaited the result in calmness and tranquillity.

“I bid thee welcome, fair Son,” said Lucifer to Brunelfin, “thou art one of the oldest and most faithful of my children, and when I placed thee as a ruler over the pleasant folks around thee, I gave them a head who could wisely direct and prudently admonish. Why bowest thou not the neck and the knee?” Loud laughed Brunelfin, and said, “Old Serpent, I scorn thee and thy wily ways, and laugh at thee and thy subtle speeches. Who made thee ruler over our pleasant tribes? Who gave thee the mastery over spirits as pure as thou wert before thy fall into thy den of shame and guilt? Thou! a dark and reprobate Spirit, to claim precedence over creatures who are still pure and uncontaminated as they were when God made them. Evil Spirit, thy ambition makes thee forget the distance between thee and my people.” He ceased, and a thousand little white hands were clapped over a thousand

little heads, and a thousand musical tongues threw their words of approval into the air.

Lucifer smiled, and answered, “ Fair child, I love the freedom of thy speech, and it is one of my maxims to allow my servants to say what they will ; but it is another of my laws, that while they speak freely, they must do my bidding.” “ I am neither slave, nor servant, nor friend of thine,” replied Brunelfin, “ nor has one of my brethren bent to thee the knee, or done thee homage. Thou art a worker of evil, we are workers of good ; it is thy delight to scatter woe and sorrow among men ; it is our delight to help them to happiness, to social comfort, and domestic joy. It is thy chief purpose to spill blood, to fill the earth with wailing widows, and with weeping orphans ; it is our delight to blunt the sword as it falls, waft aside the arrow as it flies, and to protect the good and the wise from the miseries of life and the follies of their nature. We are thy superiors, therefore, infernal Spirit, and neither thy slaves nor thy servants.”

Satan smiled, but the smile was one of bitterness, as he made answer, “ I hear bold words from a weak tongue, and boasting from a feeble race ; but I know who has taught thee this disobedience, and the hour of vengeance is at hand. It has pleased Him who reigns above as I reign below, to make this green footstool a matter of contention

between us, and now the empire above prevails, and then the empire below. Look on the world, and be judge whose power is greatest. War is let loose among the nations, and her hands are reeking with gore. Discord is busy among the people, and there is no rest; and religious hate adds her cup of poison to the infernal banquet; so the earth is mine, and the fullness thereof. Look east, there man lies prostrate under the triumphant wheels of the chariot of superstition, and whilst his soul is crushed out of him, he glories in his devotion. Look west, there priest stands against priest, with the Scripture in one hand and a dagger in the other; all are resolute on martyrdom, and hundreds of thousands are ready to vindicate their faith with sword and spear. Look north, and look south, what do you behold? Peace, good-will, happiness, and joy? no; but nation stands banded against nation, and kindred against kindred, and blood flows like a river between them. Above there may be other lords than me; but here below I reign, and reign alone."

Brunelfin answered, and said, "Fierce and untameable Spirit, thou art no ruler here; nor shall earth endure thy presence long. Thou hast indeed striven hard to keep the sun of knowledge from shining, and thou and thy servants have sought to establish thy empire amid the darkness which

overwhelmed the world. But no one knows better than thyself that all thy labours are vanity; that the huge superstructure which thou hast built will melt down at the touch of knowledge, like mist in the morning sun, and that there is a spirit abroad in the nation which will break asunder thy chains, and drive thee and all thy servants into eternal darkness and oblivion."

The Evil Spirit waxed very wroth, and rising up replied, "I know well, thou spiteful elf, from whose lips thou hast learnt these haughty words and forebodings of destruction to my empire on earth. I know well in whose subtle and specious brain these vain prophecies have been formed; one who, pretending to knowledge communicated by heavenly angels, wanders over the earth, and in the waters under the earth, and knocks at the gates of perdition, and they open willingly. But the light which he seeks to shed upon mankind shall be quenched; the throne which he strives to cast down shall be strengthened, and from his hatred to me shall I wax strong; he can no more conquer me than he can change the source of light, or alter the return of the seasons; I fear him not."

"Fear him not in hell, proud Spirit, but dread him on earth," said Sir Michael, stepping forward and looking stedfastly on the Fiend. "Dread him on earth—on earth where thou art a

fugitive and a vagabond, and where thou art permitted to show thy face for a season, that thou mayst see how vain and hopeless are all thy imaginings. Over the wide world have I wandered long, and spread the knowledge which heaven has lent me, and diffused light amid thy darkness, and roused up the lethargic spirit of the nations from its state of slumber and prostration. Now will the glorious light from above break forth, and thou wilt call on thy thick darkness, and amidst it shalt thou fly, and man shall see thee on earth no more."

The lips of Satan were curled in scorn, and he turned away in derision, and said, " Poor philosophic dreamer; and are these the weapons thou hopest to conquer me with, and cast down the structure which has taken me five thousand years to raise? Knowledge! knowest thou not that the fruit of good and evil grow on the same tree, and that such is the fortune of man, he plucks of the fruit of evil continually. What power hast thou to change the fiery impulses of over-boiling youth into coolness and discretion? by what charm wilt thou sooth down the fiery impetuosity of human ambition, which sees visions of armed battalions, and nightly in its dreams rides up to its knees in blood? or how wilt thou admonish down gross desire, covetousness, love of gain, desire of power, pride of dress, vanity in devotion, and all

those failings and lapses which pertain to human nature, and people my realms below?"

"False Spirit," said Sir Michael, "human nature will undergo no change; but the book of knowledge will be opened to man, the spirit of God will open his eyes, and he shall have justice done to his own feelings and his own wishes; he shall no longer be led blindfold into the den of perdition with the chain of ignorance and superstition around his neck." "Yes, of a truth," answered Lucifer, "the book of knowledge I know will be opened wide, but the eyes through which man will view it must be those of passion, and the heart with which he must judge it will be that of prejudice. I see, I see all the harm which this new awakened spirit of thine will do me, and I have cause to thank thee for giving mankind a new lantern and a new road to walk to perdition by."

"I thank thee, Satan, for thy scorn of knowledge," said Sir Michael, "Since it will be beneficial to thee, I hope to have thy forbearance to aid me in spreading it over the world. I can tell thee what it will do—it will chase thee from the face of the earth; it will cast thy servants after thee; it will deliver up the world to the angels of light, and to the dominion of man, and thou shalt be heard of no more as a visitant among the children of men. All charms shall be broken, all spells be destroyed,

and nature shall perform her functions free and unrestrained. Well may thy multitudes around thee look dismayed and dark; into man or woman no more shall the spirits of the pit enter, and witchcraft shall be as a thing of which man has lost all knowledge."

As a flock of wild swans spring up with startled wings, clang their agitated plumes, and seek the free air again when the hunter comes upon them, as they graze on the grassy brink of some secluded lake; so, with like clangor and agitation, arose this wild assembly at the words of Sir Michael, and so the night air resounded with their cries. "Cast the spell upon him," cried one, "which turns a man into a fish, and send him to swim for ever in the lake of darkness." "Charm him into a dove," cried a second, "and let him be chased through the air till the day of doom by all the kites of heaven." "Change him into a running stream," shouted a third, "so that the frost may freeze him up, the sun may drink him dry, and man may build a mill on his bank, and make him turn the wheel while wood grows and water runs." "Make him into a will-o'-wisp to light us through the mosses," cried an Irish witch from the Bog of Allen. "Turn him into a steed that will carry double on earth, in air, and sea," cried a bel-dame from the Border mountains. "Or make

him into a priest or a finger-post," exclaimed a Southron hag, "that he may point out the way without ever going a foot of the road himself." "Or, O," cried one who had lately written a book, "make him into a poet, that he may be crucified by criticism, daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly. I have felt the critical iron claws myself, the scorching of thine own fire is not so incurable." "Or make him a critic," exclaimed a wizard, who had lately joined the corps, "and he will scorn nature, traduce genius, worship the dusty sandals of learning, and establish some perverse and unnatural maxim, which teaches men to admire the past and despise the present."

"Peace, my children," said Lucifer, "I will find him a better employment, and one that shall be lasting." And he waved his hands in the air and said, "The spell is done. Go thou and wander the earth, and never find rest for thy body nor repose for thy mind till thou hast made all men wise, and of one opinion. Go—move thy feet, and depart." Sir Michael stood, and moved not, but looked to Lucifer and said, "Thy spells are too weak to bind a messenger from God; hast thou not yet learnt to doubt thy power, and suspect that thy might is falling?" And Lucifer stretched his hand into the air, and a wild light came dancing from the surrounding darkness, and he took the

fire in his hand, and said, “ There, follow that light, Michael, and mistake it for light from heaven.” And he threw the fire down, and it ran along the ground, and as it ran flowers sprang up and bushes budded, and a sweet incense was diffused over all the mount. Sir Michael looked at the charmed light, and stretching his hand over a group of witches and wizards seated near him, said, “ Arise, and follow the light which gleams along the primrose path of perdition.” And they sprang up and followed the light, and soon were lost in darkness.

And when Satan saw that, he was dismayed and wroth, and he waved his hand, and the dark Figure lifted his terrible axe and struck the ground on the right hand of Sir Michael, and there gushed out thick and terrible flames which sprang perpendicularly into the gloomy air, and all the multitude shouted. Then the Figure struck the ground on the left hand of Sir Michael, and from the gash bubbled up a fountain of reeking blood, strong enough to turn a mill, and the multitude rent the air with their shouts, and cried, “ Long live Lucifer, and may his reign on earth be established.”

And Satan said, “ These twain are my servants; the one is the blood which religious discord now sheds on earth, the other is the flames in

which the limbs and bodies of men are consumed. Go with them over the earth, and see that they fail not; with thee the fire shall ever burn, and the blood shall for ever flow. Begone." And a trembling for a moment seized on Sir Michael, for he felt faint with the sight of blood unrighteously shed; but his heart was strengthened, and he commanded the flames and the stream of blood, and they sank into the ground, and he turned to the Evil Spirit and said, "Thy might is used in vain, my time is now come."

And he stretched his arm towards the darkness, and a wide and sun-bright way was cut through it, a part of the deep morass was seen, a portion of pasture land, the walls and spires of a fair city, and the summits of pastoral mountains, with all their flocks asleep on their sides. And he said to Brunelfin, "Behold the way which I have made for thy brethren to pass through to their beloved hills again. Let them arise and depart, the spell which brought them and detained them is removed." And the Fairies sprang up like a flock of larks, and vanished along the morass, singing as they departed, and filling all the air with their charming minstrelsy. Sir Michael followed them with his eye, and when he saw their shining squadrons alight upon the green mountain, which clave asunder and received them, he turned to Lucifer and said,

“ How long wilt thou remain here cumbering the earth with this evil multitude, and thine own evil presence ? ” And the other said, “ So long as the natural darkness of night continues, my power is established here ; and day will not dawn on the eastern hill-tops for a stricken hour or more.” Then Sir Michael said, “ Canst thou not command the darkness of night to abide, canst thou not stay the morning from making its appearance ? ” And Lucifer said, “ Why askest thou me ? When did the sun stand still at other bidding than God’s, and when did the darkness tarry beyond its natural hour ? ” And Sir Michael replied, “ Thy fall, unholy one, and thy evil deeds in Eden have brought a new dispensation from on high ; just men made perfect, and ministering angels, are empowered, on great and sublime occasions, to stay nature in her course.”

And Sir Michael knelt, and bowed his head unto the ground, while many cried, “ Lo ! he kneels to our master ; see, he adores him.” And one who knew him said, “ He kneels to the Most High God ; his prayer will be our destruction.” And Sir Michael arose, and held out his hands towards the east ; the darkness at that moment was so gross that the hand of man might almost feel it. And the black cloud began to depart, and the eastern sky looked brightly out, even as a woman unveils

her face, and the snowy tops of the hills were seen sparkling under the moon and stars. Then at once the hill seemed shorn in twain, and the sun of heaven as bright as at summer noon burst through, hurling aside the darkness, and flooding sea, and shore, and hill, and vale, with his dazzling beams.

A yell of terror and anguish arose from the assembled multitude; they threw themselves on the earth, and called upon the hills to cover them, and the darkness to return and hide them from the insufferable splendour of heaven. The Evil Spirit stood, and though the light of heaven smote sore upon him, yet he covered not his face, nor turned it away, but endured, without one outward throe, anguish ten times more terrible than that of hell. And Sir Michael looked upon him, and respecting the serene dignity of a lofty mind in pain, bowed his head to the hill, and the green hill closed, and the cloud returned, and darkness once more overspread the earth.

CHAPTER VII.

A bonnie ship o'er the Solway went,
And snored through the brine with her white sails bent ;
I turned up my spindle, the shriek from the sea
Came far up Criffel's green mountaint to me.
I turned it back, with a moistened wing,
Away shot the ship, and I heard the men sing ;
And the maids of Colvend, with a startling laugh,
Wept and shouted for joy to see her safe.

SCOTTISH SONG.

And one hag rose and said unto another, “ Sister, our master’s spirit has got a sore fall ; fiend, have me flesh and bone, but I think that old Michael would make the best devil of the two. Will ye go home while there is darkness to go by.” And the other whispered, “ You speak truly, but speak lowly, else some one will hear our words, and we may fare the worse for them, if the Old Enemy can keep his mastery.” And they slipt silently from their seats, and went to their steeds, standing rank succeeding rank under the large oak tree. And another pair of beldames followed. “ Effie,” said one to the other, as they tottered

along, what will become of the bonnie craft of making barges out of cockle shells, and red gold out of slate stones ? Alas ! I shall never see again some sonsie shepherd crossing my threshhold with a stone of cheese on his back, and a peace be here on his lips ; nor a pleasant ploughman with his merry song and his firlet of meal, and all to win my good wishes for a kindly lamb-time, and a harvest that sends its topmost grain to the stackyard.” Ah lass,” responded the other, “ and how shall we journey from sea to shore now, since spells are in a manner cried down in the market, and charms will do the good deed no longer ? I shall never again dance beneath the palm trees of Arabia, nor quaff wine with the boors of Brabant ; our trade and calling are gone and expired. Now we may welcome a burning turf and the tar-barrel.”

Brunelfin stood by the side of Sir Michael, and whispered, “ Master, look at me. Witch Sybbie, by her wicked skill, transformed me and made me bear her over wood and wave, rough land and smooth, nor did she stint either spur or whip, till I stood in a foam under yon broad oak tree. Are you pleased with my punishment, and must I only curse my tormentor, and let her go, or will you give me power to conduct her home in the way that she brought me here.” “ Thou art a disobedient varlet,” said Sir Michael, “ but as thou wilt be

very unhappy till thou art in some sort revenged, go, do as thou wilt; but remember, that tender mercy in an Elf is a rare virtue, and thou must practise it even on one possessed with an evil spirit.” And away the Elf flew, laughing a loud laugh of joy, and stood by the trysting tree.

And while he stood there he threw a spell over all the steeds, and they began to neigh, and snort, and prance, and smoke seemed to come from their nostrils, and fire to flash from their eyes. And the witches and warlocks came all in a flock, to mount and begone. One laid her hand on her horses mane, and said, “So so, my pretty creature, why dost thou arch the neck and paw so fiercely? remember by whom thou wert made, and think thyself honoured in bearing a form so important as mine.” And another entreated, “Come my sonsie thing, and carry me cannilie home. I shall feed thee with the white bread and the brown, and give thee winnowed corn from my own hands, and a ragwort shalt thou never be more. Come away in peace, my winsome thing.” And a third exclaimed, “Come, thou cursed creature, and come quietly, else I shall gore thy sides with my steel rowel, and feed thee on bran.” But still the horses snorted and plunged and neighed, and no words could soothe them, and no spells could make them obedient.

At this moment a witch advanced towards the trysting tree, exclaiming, “I have a good brown steed, and if there be might in a spell, and sharpness in a steel spur, I shall make him obedient. Ah! this comes of riding on ragworts and spade shanks; I never crossed the back of ought harder than the back of a blythe brown elf. A wanton elf came to my bower door, and I trow I trimmed him. He has got a tasting of the road dames, and I'll warrant he will be able to tell the weight of a witch while woods grow green.” As she advanced, Brunelfin suddenly touched her, and in a moment an hundred hags leaped on their steeds, and with the Elf mounted before them, away they dashed through the deep and dark morass, making the mud fly high into the air.

“The might of our master aid us,” said one; “seven demons seem to possess my steed, and it follows that accursed light which goes gleaming like an evil spirit before us.” “An accursed light!” cried a second; “there is no light that I see, but there is before us a laughing Elf, riding on a good gray mare, and they are going at a hell of a pace. We will be round the world before the day dawns.” “An Elf!” cried a warlock, as he squattered through a deep quag-mire; “there he goes on his bonnie gray mare, and a wild light to guide him; what new vagary is this that has taken our master?

his service is growing sore for the body, and we all ken it is serious to the soul.” “Ah,” said a hoary witch,” as she adjusted her mantle, and endeavoured to gather her locks from the blast, “Ah, this is the work of a worse hand than that of our worthy master. He has his freaks and his flings; there is no denying of that, and he sometimes prefers the rosie cheeks and glancing een of a young dame, more than one of his discretion should. But this wild rade ! alas, there is a spell upon us, and we must submit to our fate, as others have submitted to us; there is a destiny in all things.” And away they dashed; the earth appeared burning under their feet, and the stars in the sky seemed long lines of fire.

“I think we must be in Ireland now,” said one of the beldames ; “here the land seems puddled with the spade ; there’s no as much corn in the country as would feed it a week ; there is no a house that a sow would live in with its own consent, and the people as they lie down to sleep at night know not where they are to breakfast to-morrow. We are in Ireland. It is not meant for our good, but for our punishment, that we are brought here. I have been at our master’s door, Cummers, and got a peep at his country, a brave land and a hot. He can never think so meanly of

us as to confine us here.” The rapid motion of the multitude cut short all further speech, and the beldame long after, in relating her strange and unwelcome ride, invariably declared that she shuddered with the dread of being left spell-bound among the mosses and mountains of merry Hibernia.

The wide sea lay before them, rolling its multitude of waves towards the shore; they lingered not a moment, but plunged into the foaming tide, making the water rise like rainbows into the air. “Well now,” said a witch to her companion, as they breasted the wild billows, and darted along the summits of the curled waves as quick as the lightning, “well now, I like this; we are going I know not whither; we are led I care not by whom; we are flying with a rapidity far beyond any power of motion which we ourselves possess, and I think we must even make this casualty into a pleasure, and try to enjoy the delight of it while it lasts. See the moon seems running backward in the sky, the stars rib all the firmament with fire, and this foaming sea now on which we are so blithely trampling only moistens us, and makes us comfortable.” As she spoke she sank down with all her companions, and rising again, and sputtering the salt brine from their lips, they continued their unwilling flight with unabated speed.

"All the fiends be praised, and our master's might be lauded," cried a dozen beldames at once, as emerging from the sea they rushed ashore, and continued their flight over gardens, orchards, and vineyards. "Here we are in a happy country, where the air is pure, the ground level, and no prickly mountains of furze and juniper, as in barren Scotland, or miles of miserable moss and stony mountain, as in unhappy Ireland." This was not well uttered till they found themselves on the ground hands and feet. They raised a general outcry of sorrow and despair; but their merciless leader heeded neither curse, nor sob, nor moan, but continued his career, looking back with a smile at the miserable crowd behind him, who with bleeding hands and distressed feet obeyed the charm which compelled them to follow.

At this moment the creature on which the Elf rode opened its lips and said, "Accursed Elf! black be the moment of time in the estimation of fiend and man, in which thou didst cross my threshold, and cursed be thy name for ever on the earth, and mayst thou, when the power of Satan ceases on this globe, and all creatures are removed to a happier place, mayst thou be left behind in solitary sorrow, unable to give or receive joy, and become a drudging, grudging goblin, fallen off from thy proud estate, and scorn-

ed by man, and unacknowledged by God." Loud laughed Brunelfin, for it was to him this speech was addressed. "Sybbie," said he, "it was with other feelings, and with far other words, that you transformed me from my natural shape, and pricked me fiercely over land and flood, as if your might was to continue for ever. I have vowed to put a girdle round the globe, seated on your dappled back, and that before the dawn, so forward with all the willingness you are mistress of." And the gray steed groaned, and started away as quick as the first beam of the sun when it glances over the mountain top.

As Brunelfin proceeded on his way, with witches and warlocks in his train, he was aware of a burly peasant who, spurring up to his side on a dappled mare, cried, "Gude speed thee, brown spirit, sair, sair, have I striven to come up to thee. Save us, sirs! but this is a fearful ride. Little did I think, when I shook the charmed bridle over bel-dame here, and turned her as she turned me oftener than once, into a four-footed thing; little did I think, ye brown emissary, that ye would run such a rig as this. Conscience, creature, can ye no let us have daylight to it, that I may see strange lands, and look at long nebbed things, and converse with the sons of men, and whistle to the fowls of heaven as we fly past them. There now,

look there ; behold that sleeping city ; three hundred thousand souls, with gladsome faces, are lying there : I hear them snoring as men snore at a sermon. Heugh ! the city's an hundred miles behind ere I have spoken the sentence. You're a graceless imp to hurry God's creatures on at this unnatural speed."

Brunelfin laughed, and said, " Come, my pleasant friend, and enjoy this marvellous ride without a murmur. Thou mayst be thankful that thou hast the fortune to be uppermost, for by my faith I tell thee thou art a gross and sensual creature, and I have done more graceless tricks than transform thee even now, and give thy side to the spur ; what sayest thou ?" " Why I only say, my cannie brown rider," said the other, " that ye speak bonnie words, and brave words, and bold words ; yet they are only words, and mair than that I mind them nae mair than the shepherd minds last year's snow, or the daisy dreads the sunshine. I ride sicker on my saddle, my bonnie brown man."

Brunelfin struck him over the shoulders with his riding wand, and said, " Have four feet for two." " Aha," exclaimed the rustic, " it winna do ; that shoe winna fit, try another ; man, what's become of your words of power, and your glamour might, and your charms that can change a gray stone into a hummel cow, and a hay-stack into a

cathedral?" Brunelfin looked stedfastly upon him for a moment's space, and said, "Be peace between us, thou art permitted, and I am permitted to punish these hags and warlocks, so let us do our work as brothers. Which way wouldest thou like to wend brother? what wildnook of creation dost thou desire to look on; name it, and have thy desire." The peasant gave a shrug, and shook his head, and answered, "Conscience! I care not, and yet I have a hankering to see the flesh-pots of auld Egypt; to see the land which I have read of in Scripture, fruitful in corn and crocodiles, with all its tombs, and temples, and pyramids. It maun be a grand land by this time, if its people have gone on improving." And the Elf laughed a loud laugh, and said, "Have thy wish."

And away they went, regardless of moist or dry; the earth seemed turning round to meet them; nor did they slacken bridles, till a wide and noble river shone before them, and emptied itself into the sea through many mouths. "Aweel," said the Peasant, "that's a sweet stream, and stay—these prostrate columns, these towering tombs, these magnificent ruins, amid which the wild creatures of the desert howl; they all tell of empire, and of a great people passed away." "They tell of Egypt," said the Elf; "Of Egypt!" exclaimed the peasant, with a sigh, "and is the land of the Pharaohs,

and the palaces of bondage come to this? Aweel, I see enough of Egypt. The robber Arab and the cruel Turk divide the inheritance of the first of nations between them." "What other nation have you a desire to see?" said Brunelfin.

The peasant smiled, and said, "Conscience! ye see I know not what nation to ask for. It's just like one coming home from a far land, and inquiring for friends and comrades; and one's dead, and one's fled, and one's wandered away, and strange men fill their places, and it becomes a heartbreak rather than a pleasure to think of them. But since you are kindly, will you give me a glimpse of a country called Greece — a knot of republics, a little land, full of great men, poets, sculptors, heroes, philosophers, and legislators. It cannot have faded and fallen away like Egypt. Give me a look on't—I long to see it. Mickle have I heard men preach and talk about it in my time." And Brunelfin laughed, and said, "I shall indulge thee; 'tis somewhat out of the way, but the ruder the road there's greater variety of sorrow in it, for this sinful train of ours. Come, be sure of your seat."

The arrow from the bow, the ball from the culverin, the shout from the lip, the beam from the sun, are all images of sluggish motion, compared to the startling rapidity with which this creature

of the elements cleared the air, and precipitated himself from shore to shore of the intervening sea. A loud cry of anguish burst from the lips of his tumultuary train, and his peasant companion was breathless, and reeling in his seat, when he alighted on the summit of a mountain, and heard Brunelfin say, “Behold glorious Greece!” And the peasant sat, and looked earnestly and sadly from sea to sea, his eye lingering for a moment on every hill, and vale, and temple, and stream. “Enough, enough!” he said: “the nation that once falls, falls never to rise again. Enough, enough! I see enough, to see that Greece has not been named, without cause, the first of nations; she looks more glorious, even in her rags, than other nations in their robes. There are her temples covered with living sculpture, and giving an example to the earth of true proportion, regular beauty, and strength. Her streams are yet glowing in immortal verse, and the very stones which choke their channels have once been gods, heroes, poets, and philosophers; they bear a halo about them still, a stamp of immortality, such as no nation and no mind can impress. Enough, enough! Greece has not disappointed me.” And he turned his face to the other side of Mount Athos.

And away they went, over mountain, and vale,

and wood; ten thousand lights streamed upwards from the populous cities over which they passed; millions of living creatures—the wild and the tame, the savage and the gentle—lay visible below them. On an immense plain a conqueror was marching at the head of his army, their scimitars glittered in the dew, their helmets and breast-plates gave back the radiance of the stars as vivid as they received it, and the long glittering masses of the infantry, and the trampling columns of an innumerable cavalry, filled all the air with light and sound. “ See,” said Brunelfin, and he threw from his hand something which descended with a trail of light like a shooting star, “ see, and tell me what thou seest.”

And his companion looked, and laughed, and clapped his hands, and exclaimed, “ A noble sight, by my faith!—there, they have found work among themselves to do; the fire touches chief after chief, and they all rebel against their leader, and they quarrel among themselves; and lo! their blades grow red, and their carabines flash, and their war-horses saddles are fast emptying. Well done, thou evil fire of ambition! thou hast saved the life of many a quiet and worthy man, and cut off a few of the fierce and restless spirits who afflict the earth.”

“ Would you desire to see any other people?”

said Brunelfin ; “ I am anxious to oblige a pleasant fellow like you, who beguiles a wild and unwonted road by lively speeches and pithy remarks.” And the peasant rubbed his hands together, and said, “ A weel, ye are very obliging, and there’s just ae people of whom antiquity makes mention, a fierce and a martial people, who conquered the earth, and ruled the earth. Can ye just give me a bird’s-eye peep at Mistress Rome—ae glance would do. She was a glorious queen once, and I would like to see how her crown becomes her brows. I jalouse it stands somewhat awry.”

And the Elf said, “ I anticipated thy wish ; look down, and tell me what thou seest.” And the peasant looked earnestly down, and exclaimed, “ No : this is some glamour sleight, some wildfire thrown into the air, to delude my sight, and make me think meanly of mankind. I see—but why need I tell you what I see, when it is all unreal and fabulous, a mere dream of the imagination, and yet unlike a dream, for slumber clothes all things with beauty, yet I see imperial Rome in wretchedness. Come, come, show me an honest sight, that a man may swear to.”

“ Tell me what thou seest, friend,” said Brunelfin, “ and I shall tell thee if thy sight deceives thee.” “ I see then a city ragged and ruinous, her streets choked with filth, her temples made into

hovels for wretches who lie slumbering on rags, while all the land around lies like a desert.” “Rome, Rome, Rome,” cried the Elf. “What more?” “I see,” answered the other, “ten thousand warriors knocking at her gates, her rulers are pale and trembling, her people cry on the saints to shield them, and run to kiss the brazen toe of Saint Peter, and to fall prostrate before an image of the Virgin, and to supplicate the bloody stone of Thomas-à-Becket, that the invaders may be turned from their gates.” “Rome, Rome,” cried the Elf, “Rome, and Rome only, could do this. Seest thou ought else?” “By the sun of heaven!” exclaimed the peasant, “I have seen enough, and more than enough. Rome, Rome, low hast thou fallen. Compared to thee Babylon is blessed: the traveller seeks for it amid the bushes of the desert, and rouses a lion where kings once had power. Compared to thee, Nineveh has a brow of glory: the fisherman dries his nets on her temple stones, and wonders of what city the dust is which lies at his feet. Away, away! Belt green earth at any part of her waist thou wilt, I have seen enough. I shall now shut my eyes, that they may see no more of human misery.”

The Elf gave a wild shout, and waved his hands, and cried, “Wretches, spur and begone,

and rest not till ye reach the snowy mountain which overlooks the Pole. Away, I follow." And, hurling like a snow-drift, away they moved through the burthened air, while, behind them, with a wild laugh and cry, followed Brunelfin, cheering on his companion, and driving the startled hags before him like one commissioned to distress and destroy them. The Elf knew, though a supernatural strength was given to him, that his power over them dissolved with the dawn of morn. He therefore resolved, while his reign lasted, to let them feel that all the spirit with which they were endowed was not more than enough to bear them through the trial which awaited them. His resolution was to afflict, and spare not, and make them feel that it required all their fiend-given strength for the hour of sorrow.

As they drove along they encountered a snowy cloud which, with a roaring wind behind it, was descending obliquely on the summits of the central mountains of the earth. Down upon them descended the shining deluge, and such was its chillness and its weight, that from mid air they were beat to earth like a flight of wild birds caught in a whirlwind. Amid the snow they shivered and floundered on ; and, emerging from it at last, they started perpendicularly into the air, casting

from their locks and mantles the cold flakes, and smiling, even amid the misery of their unwilling flight, at escaping from being overwhelmed for ever amid the eternal snow.

“They shall soon have more of sorrow in their face than smiles,” said the Elf to his companion : “see yon lofty mountain, clothed mid-waist high with woods which never bowed but to time and the tempest, and crowned on the summit with untrodden snow ; over that wild mountain lies their line of flight—follow me : a scene is nigh, may make you open your eyes seriously, though you seem to have shut them.” And his companion looked—dark and lofty rose the mountain, and up it with rapid and untired flight the multitude winged their way. As they came nigh the summit the mountain moaned, its pine trees shook and rustled like reeds, its top was cleft asunder, and an ocean of melted lava and whirlwinds of fire spouted up mid-heaven high, and, descending again, gushed over the groves as water crushes down reeds. As far as the eye could reach, there was only visible an ocean of undulating fire.

A loud and dolorous yell the hags uttered, when the burning lava sallied from the mountain upon them, and on their haggard faces the light threw a fearful illumination. They escaped with singed locks and scorched limbs, and went moaning on

their way. Brunelfin laughed gaily when he saw their sorrowful plight, and said to his companion, “The dawn approaches, and I can pursue this pastime little farther; but one word in thy ear: turn thy bridle back, I have removed the spell, and given thee what speed thou wilt. When thou comest to Annanwater, there wilt thou find a smith turning a red-hot horse-shoe, e’en put iron on the feet of thy bonnie grey mare, she will carry thee all the surer for it, and, moreover, will never trouble thee in any other shape. Thou understandest me.”

The rustic turned his bridle willingly about, and exchanged a look of intelligence with the Elf, but he rubbed his elbow and shrugged his shoulders, and, looking at his gray mare from head to tail, said, “She’s a bonnie creature surely, and carries me through the moist and the dry as if she were made of wind and sunshine. Her flowing mane is unpruned, her long streaking tail is uncut, and on her bonnie white hoofs she has never worn iron or steel, or ought harder than Turkey leather. I maun therefore, I think, let the winsome creature win to her ain hame without the indignity of being shod. See now if she disnae understand me, and I’ll warrant she will bear me the mair discreetly back if I speak her fair, and pat her dappled sides, and guide her cannilie.” The Elf smiled, and said,

“Aye, aye! were she young, and were she well-favoured, as she is wild in her own will, she would merit some mildness; but turn your bridle and begone. I have a dour, a fierce and an ill-favoured race to contend with, and ere the day dawns I shall read them a lesson such as they will not fail to remember.” Away the peasant darted on his way home, and forward the Elf flew, and hung on the route before him, as a falcon hangs on the rear of a flock of crows.

On each side lay a wide and frozen sea, whose solid waters the suns of five thousand years had never thawed; and before them rose an immense mountain, composed of solid blocks of ice, piled in wild confusion till they reached above the clouds, and showered over with snows, on which the wildest animal of the desert had never trod, nor which the wildest fowl of heaven had brushed with its wing. “Wretches,” cried their Tormentor, “know ye where ye are now? Behold the work of the fiend’s skill, and the witch’s knowledge. Here, in other days, they thought, unobserved of the Most High, to pile up a mountain which would connect earth with heaven, and from the bosom of that frozen ocean they quarried the strange materials. For seven years they laboured, and with the eighth year they hoped to fill the purity of heaven with the impurity of hell, and their work nigh touched the

fixed stars. And the guardian Angel of the earth looked upon them, and, when they beheld his terrible face, a strange fear and a wild dismay seized upon them, and they sought to fly and could not. And he shook his golden tresses, and lightnings darted forth, and a fierce whirlwind; and the mountain remained, but those who made it were never seen more. But listen, and ye shall hear; under its frozen centre are they buried, there to abide till the world melts away, when they will be called up to judgment.” And when they heard this they trembled and groaned, and ascended the mountain in fear.

When they came to its summit, the air was clear and cold, the stars of the morning gleamed around them, and the wide world lay like a map at their feet. They stayed their flight, for further they could not go, and Brunelfin said, “Look, and I will show you what your fate is to be on earth when the sun of knowledge shines.” And they looked, and they saw all the countries of Europe before them, with their cities, their palaces, and their people. And the lands were purified from slavery, the chains with which superstition had bound the people were fallen off, and there were none who monopolized sanctity, or traded in the fears and the failings of human nature. And they saw the people with brightness on their

brows, busied in honourable and industrious pursuits, and they heard the sound of the impassioned song: they saw the glowing vision of human life with which the painter animated his canvass, and they beheld the majestic forms of heroes, and bards, and other gifted spirits, breathing in the inspiration of sculpture. While wandering over the earth, scorned, shunned, and despised, they beheld the wretched relics of Satan's servants soliciting bitter bread and miserable raiment, which they could not always obtain.

“Behold,” said Brunelfin, “the ministers of your master in the latter day, when knowledge has come openly to man. See the wretched beings who doubt their own power to work woe and sorrow, and whose might is so impaired, that, like the serpent in the snow, the mortal sting lies torpid and motionless; nor will all the heat of hell warm it into life and strength. Their power is dwindled down, and lives rather in belief than in reality; and their name will cease to diffuse terror over the earth, or live, save in the life which poetry confers, or romance bestows.”

He spoke this in a serious tone, and it was evident that he imagined the picture which he displayed was that of historic truth prophetically anticipated. “And hast thou dragged us over the wide wild earth, through fire, and water, and moss,

and moor," exclaimed a witch, who sat arranging her mantle, and shedding her disordered locks from her eyes with fingers sharp and yellow as the claws of a kite, " and all to show us the sorrow to which we are to come in the latter time ? Foul fall thee then, brown Spirit : thou and thine have ever been our tormentors since first we sought to do our master service. Mindest thou not, thou villainous elf, when I threw as noble a spell as ever turned a ragwort into a riding horse, how thou didst mar my labour, and sent me riding on a creature of thy own making, that halted as it went, and had a back like a hay-knife." " Ah !" exclaimed another, setting her hands on her knees, and gazing fiercely into his face, " is it thee indeed, thou cursed elf? I marvel how thou darest to presume to show thy unbaptized face among honest folk, when thou knowest thou hast been guilty of the most shameless deeds among the servants of Lucifer. Once on a time, when a gallant mariner bought a bagfull of fortunate wind from me, with which he hoped to enrich himself among the nations of the earth, it was thee and no one else who put storms and tempests into the bargain, and gave my cannie corsair to the bottom of the great deep, and lost me a profitable friend."

Brunelfin laughed loud, and exclaimed, " Friends, friends, be pacified and be calm. I have indeed

done all and each of you many little pieces of service, such as you mention, and may hope to do more. What think you of the pleasant journey we have lately enjoyed; there are many other countries to see, and I would gladly oblige you.” “Thou art a right merry elf,” said a buxom witch with a smile, “and hast thy own curious ways, which it becomes me not to mention. But we are all satisfied with the hasty journey we have performed, and thou must e’en let us go quietly away like darkness before the morning sun, without indulging us with the sight of any other unknown lands. Thou hast ever had the advantage over us poor weak creatures.” And she looked in his face with two blue eyes, large and lustrous, and swimming in liquid light, and he could not help thinking them bright ones; then she laid her hand upon his, and he looked on her fingers, long, and round, and white, and felt them with his own, which were short, and brown, and dark nailed; and then she laid her other hand upon him, and her breath grew warm on his cheek; but before he was aware she touched the bridle of his steed with her hand, and the charmed bit dropt out of its mouth, and he was thrown down with violence, and five hundred voices exclaimed, “She is won, she is won!” and there stood the Witch in her natural shape, and with all her power at will.

“ We will tear him limb from limb,” cried one, “ and scatter him like snow over ocean and land.” “ We will fasten him under one of these huge blocks of ice,” said another, “ and let him lie till the hour of general doom.” “ Cummers,” exclaimed a third, “ I marvel ye can keep your claws off him. I would fain pick out his two green een, and feed the weasels with them.” “ Ye are all wrong together,” cried a fourth, “ we will bake him over Mount Etna in a pie, and send him down as a dainteth to the fiends.” “ No, no, my children,” said the hag, “ we will use the Elf discreetly; we will convert him into a drudging goblin, and make him serve us by night and by day, and be a regular post between earth and Erebus.”

He who was the subject of this wild conversation stood composed, nor seemed at all to mind their menaces. When they were silent he spoke, nor did he care that they had gathered around him with inflamed visages and eyes shining with fury. “ My gentle dames,” he said, “ why should ye behave unkindly to one who has never done ye any serious evil, yet who has largely the power of working ye sorrow. See, when ye can catch that bird, ye will have power over me;” and opening his hands as he spoke, a bird no larger than a wren flew from him, and formed a

circle in its flight round the summit of the mountain.

“Plotcock! Plotcock!” shouted a hundred voices at once, and away the hags flew in a flock in pursuit of the elfin bird. The longer it flew it flew the faster, and the faster that it flew the more rapid became the pursuit of the pursuers. “Its here,” cried one; “its here,” cried another; “I have caught it,” cried a third; “and I have caught it,” cried a fourth, and with shout, shriek, and hollo they continued to pursue. No sooner did one think she had caught it, than it was seen by another winging its way before them all, and still they pursued and still it flew; and Brunelfin looked on and laughed till the day began to dawn upon the summits of the far snowy mountains, and the sun was announced in the east by a thousand trembling flushings of delicate light, which sprung up in the blue hollow sky. But no sun ever shone upon that desert mountain; his beams streamed up in the sky, but sank as soon as they appeared, and night returned to her dominion. Then Brunelfin descended, and returned to the inhabited world, and he looked back, and still the witches ran round the snowy mountain top with shout, and whoop, and hallo. And he smiled, and said, “Amuse ye there; the spell will hold till I reach

the valley, where lives my own Elfrida. Ah, often when the moon is in the sky I wander round her dwelling, and worship the light at her window, her shadow on the wall as she moves to and fro, sit in her little bower and bless her footsteps in the grass; and when she is asleep I look in and see her parted lips smiling in slumber, for she ay smiles when she is dreaming of me.” And kindling into rapture with the picture which he drew, he descended from the mountain top with the speed of a star-beam.

CHAPTER VIII.

Great is thy power, and great thy fame,
For kend and noted is thy name ;
And though you lowin heugh's thy hame.

Thou travels far,
And faith thou's neither lag nor lame,
Nor blate nor scar.

BURNS.

LUCIFER was left alone with Sir Michael and his companion on the solitary mount. All the shapes which crowded it so lately were gone; the splendid tower, and the glowing lights were vanished from the place, and nothing remained but the scathed oak, and the crumbling stones of an ancient castle. Upon one of these stones Lucifer stood, pondering on revenge and evil; his face was calm and unclouded; no outward contortions betrayed the internal agony of his frame; and, but for the glimmering light of his eyes, he seemed a statue hewn with the sublime skill of the Grecians of old. Michael stood before him, with his arms folded on his bosom, and a look of austere tranquillity.

“ Mortal,” said Lucifer, “ you have done well. For these many years you have been the laborious thrall of Him above, whom I shall never more name, and as the reward of all your deeds your body will be filled with sickness. It will go to the worms and dissolve into dust, while your soul will descend into the pit of perdition, there to be purified for ages unsummed with unquenchable fire; a fair reward for the deeds you have achieved. There are other immortal spirits who would have esteemed your fidelity, and made the reward more pleasant. You understand me?”

“ Evil Spirit,” replied Sir Michael, “ I understand thee. I serve a God whose actions the world no more contains than this little mount will absorb the morning light; one who can reward virtue with heaven, and punish evil with hell; who looks on all beneath the sun as his inheritance, and who controls the reprobate spirits, whom he expelled from heaven, and says unto their mightiest, ‘ Evil worm crawl back to thy den, nor be seen in the light of day.’ The other spirit of whom thou didst speak is one over whom a created being, whose ways are those of righteousness, has power: he has felt my power lately, and soon may feel it again. Thou understandest me?”

“ Of a truth I understand you,” replied Lucifer, with a smile; and looking his opponent stedfastly in

the face, “I understand you, and I do not believe you; what! a mortal worm like you to controul the immortal spirits? That can never be. Him on high would never delegate his power to creatures so likely to make a base use of it. He is a jealous God. Tell me something which I can credit.”

“Lucifer,” answered Sir Michael, “thy might here expires with the dawn; thy strength is a permitted thing, and, whilst it is employed according to the decrees of heaven, I bow, and say His will be done. Taunt me not therefore with idle words, but depart from this earth, and depart with lessened lustre and diminished power. Thou knowest that thy reign is approaching its close, and that all thy visible dominion here will melt down like darkness beneath the light, and that the fresh sweet air of this earth thou wilt never breathe again.” “And who shall expel me from this region of human misery?” replied Satan; “wilt thou presume to contend the inheritance of the earth with me? Thy presence is not ushered in by fierce lightning and dread thunder; when thou art sick thou groanest, when thou art sad thou weepest, and when thou art pleased I see thee smile; thou hast all the symptoms of mortality about thee. Worm, worm! when thy little span of seventy years is gone, what art thou?

Dust, dust ! and presumest thou to mark out the dominion of an immortal ? ”

Sir Michael said, “ My words are not my own, neither are my actions ; among the souls of just men made perfect I have been long admitted, and long have I looked down from the stars upon this wretched world, and wept for the miseries which have fallen upon man. I have seen the earth filled with wrong and violence ; nations bowed down in slavery and superstition ; and the religion of Christ, which was given to the world for a blessing and a benefit, made into a stepping-stone for ambition ; a priest has become one of Satan’s chief servants, and the aisle of his church, instead of being the way to heaven, is the avenue of hell. To curb, to restrain, to instruct, and to enlighten am I come ; to rouse up the mind of man from its ten centuries of slumber, and to learn him how to enjoy the blessings of the earth, and the gifts of the Most High.”

“ Ho, ho, ho ! ” cried Satan, “ I must speak cunningly to you ; you may mean to be one of my prime servants, for all the great projectors of human reform come with liberty on their lips, and chains in their hands, and man has never come a step nearer to any of the promised blessings, even from Mahomet’s days till now. It is a pretty piece of policy, and I commend you for it. The priest

sells you a seat in heaven, and you find it a nook in hell ; he persuades you to buy repentance at the standard valuation which the merciful church affixes to murder, or any other moderate misdeed ; while the reformer of states and principalities has also his immunities to propose, and his enjoyments to offer, and the miserable mortal who hearkens to them finds himself enslaved in this world, and punished in the next. Thou art a Reformer, and therefore I bow to thee, thou wilt do me good service I foresee."

"Spirit of Evil," replied Sir Michael, "no wonder that thou seest nothing in the marvels which God will work for man, but sorrow and shame, and sore punishment. Out of the purity of life thou bringest impurity, and amid happiness and holiness thou lovest to throw the brands which are tormenting thine own frame. But notwithstanding thy idle speech, and bitter taunts, what I have said shall come to pass, to thy misery and confusion. Thou art sustained here by darkness, superstition, and ignorance : these are about to pass away, and thou wilt depart with them."

"A prophet ! a prophet !" exclaimed Satan, "a sayer of miracles, a promiser of mighty promises, yet one who performs none. What has all thy boasts and threats come to ? To confusion. Knew I thee not of old, when thou wert a

pretender to more than mortal skill, and vowed when thou sawest how strongly the foes prevailed against Britain, that thou wouldest hem it in with a brazen wall, through which the malice of man could not make a way, and over which the fowls of heaven alone could fly. Didst thou not keep imprisoned spirits working at thy wild undertaking, melting the secret ores of the earth into portable materials, and mining the world to the core, to fulfil thy idle wishes? Thou little knowest that while thy ten thousand cauldrons simmered, and gleamed with the liquid brass, that I was present, defeating thy spells, and mingling the ductile metal with fire from hell, which took away all its natural power, and rendered it for ever liquid. Ah! thou most subtle of all my enemies, thou knewest not of this till it was too late, till the time was past and gone, and in revenge didst thou not imprison my drudging Spirits under the Atlantic Ocean, there to gnash their teeth, and lament, till the world is rolled together as a scroll, and the sea is drunk up, and the moon and the stars expire."

"Spirit of Guile," said Sir Michael, "imagine not that thou art mightier than thou art. It was not the will of God that I should girdle the island with a wall of brass, therefore I can only allow thee the merit of a will to destroy, without the power. I misunderstood the revelation which was

made to me, and interpreted the message in the literal signification of the words, and thus I miscarried as thou hast described, though thy might stayed not my progress. The glory of my island is to be greater than I thought. The wall which is to surround it will be formed by the bold hearts and heroic hands that dwell upon it; and the foes of human freedom and religious knowledge will find that a rampart stronger than brass, and a might far beyond all the powers of enchantment, girdle it from harm in the hour of danger. Come all the force and the fury of man, inflamed by the rancour of the fiends, and by what is equally fell and unrelenting, religious hatred, come, and ye shall feel when retreat is too late to save ye, how Britain is defended."

Satan turned away his head, to conceal a smile of scorn which kindled up his features ; he looked on Sir James, and said, " Come hither, Sir Knight : your companion, Michael, will shape out a difficult task for you to accomplish. You have spilt human blood, filled cities with shrieking mothers, and towns with sudden fire, shaken towers to their foundation stones, and called on famine and misery to follow in your footsteps. Go arm you in your surest mail, and place around your isle ten thousand times ten thousand, all as fierce and as terrible in war as yourself; let them stand

on the ocean brink as thick as the sand and shells which heap the shore, and you will not save your island from the spoiler.” And he strode disdainfully towards the edge of the mound, and looked towards the east; but the east was as dark as the grave, and the mist covered up hill and morass as thickly as winter snow covers the ground. The bleat of the flock was not heard from the fold; nor the low sweet song of the wild birds, with which they welcome approaching day.

“ Fear it not, Apostate Angel,” said Sir Michael, “ light will not visit men’s eyes till I will it, and here on this ground, blighted and barren because of thy unblessed presence, I mean to prove thy wisdom, and thy wiles, and thy strength. Thou art an immortal spirit, doomed to pain for thy transgressions; I am a mortal creature, exalted to the community of angels. Let us prove who is the mightiest.” And he went close unto the Evil Spirit, and held out his hand, as if to touch it. “ If knowledge,” he continued, “ is to banish ignorance wholly from this isle, if the pure light is to overcome the darkness, if man is to be as free as the breeze on his native hills, and virtue and genius the sole measure by which honour and all nobleness are to be dealt out to man, I command thee to descend whence thou camest, and infect the air of earth no more.” The Fiend

darkened where he stood, the ground trembled and gaped, and he sank to the middle, and there remained, his face dilated, and his eyes flashing with anger.

“ See ! see ! ” said Satan, “ thy prophecy will be but half fulfilled : there will be folly, and ignorance, and superstition good store, on thy little island, work as wisely as thou wilt. Even as I am half sunk at thy command, so will thy brethren of the dust be but half redeemed. Hast thou any more commands to lay upon me, before I show thee that my ancient power is not wholly gone, and that I have strength left to assert my dignity, and servants good store, who are more than equal to hold contest with any thing sprung from the earth like man ? ”

Then Sir Michael said, “ Come, ascend—stand on the green earth again ; I have shown thee that over thy person I have power. I have more remaining, so let not thy wisdom tempt me ; yet, if thou hast some of thine ancient strength left, leave it not unemployed. I desire of thee no mercy, for when the hour comes I shall show thee none. Come, what resources hast thou ? Call on thy legions ; let me see them face to face.”

Lucifer went to the border of the mound, and spoke to the dark cloud, which enclosed it as a wall. And, as he spoke, Sir Michael beheld a

troop of gigantic steeds and riders shaped out of the gross darkness, who moved as Lucifer waved his hand, and appeared, though endowed with form, to be without features, and power of speech. The colossal phantoms formed a circle about the mound, and moved incessantly round, with fire rolling after them. There appeared no way to pass from the place, save through the air.

Sir James gazed upon the sable phantoms, and said to Lucifer, “Who are they; and what is their errand here?” And the other replied, “They are of my faithful servants, they are the offspring of the earth, and now are they endowed with knowledge as the gods, and power is given unto them over the children of men, and they are come to vex them, and to fill them with trouble, and make them lament the hour of their birth, and curse the hand which fed them when they were on their mother’s knee.” “Of hell, and not of earth, are these terrible shadows,” said Sir James; “the soul of no sinful worm is permitted to return, to cumber the earth, and alarm the living.” And he stepped nigh to the forms, and saw them moving slowly onward, neither looking to the right nor to the left, and encircling the mount, even as if a stream of water had been poured around it.

And Satan answered, and said, “They are all the children of men, earth-born creatures, yet

worthy for their wickednees to fill the place of the fiends, and here they are come to do my bidding, nor murmur at it whatever it may be. They are the spirits of unjust judges, who gave court judgments and opinions according to power ; who warped the truth and sold justice for gold, and titles for a harlot's smile, or the nod of a king. And they are let loose upon the earth to infuse evil counsels into men, to cause innocent blood to be shed, and maintain the glorious doctrine that might surpasses right ; and well in this green isle of thine has it been maintained."

And Sir Michael said, " Bid thy dread pageantry begone. Comest thou here, subtle one, to alarm me with terrible words, and with wild fictions. Fill all the air with shadows fiercer than these ; bid the earth open, and hell gape, and still shall I scorn thee, and tell thee that no power can hinder thy throne on earth from being cast down. Bid thy idle shadows begone, else I will transform them into real and terrible forms, and the number of thy tormenters will be increased." And as Sir Michael spoke the rustling as of wind among withered reeds was heard, and the phantoms dissolved away, and were seen no more.

" Old serpent of the Tweed," said Satan to Sir Michael, " my hour is coming, and from the sun I fly. I know thy power, and thou knowest mine :

so let us part, nor meet again till thou comest with a cry to the gate of terror, through which all things mortal must come. But this mortal bears my mark; there is blood upon his right hand, and blood upon his left; there is evil in his eye; and false judgments have passed his lips; and as mine I seize him.” And Sir James, though he saw no hand, felt a touch on his shoulder which seemed to scorch him to the bone. And he exclaimed, “Cursed spirit, I have repented and obtained grace; so touch me not.” But still the burning hand was on him, and he drew his sword and plunged it into the Spirit who stood beside him, and he rolled himself together like a frozen leaf, and vanished with a loud sob.

But soon there returned the same Spirit, and stood between him and Sir Michael; the same Spirit, but more youthful in appearance. He was wholly naked, save his feet, which were enclosed in sandals of polished steel, and his long and curling hair descended like the boughs of a tree overloaded with blossoms. “Creature of earth,” he said, “thou hast presumed to touch an immortal with a mortal weapon; so thou shalt go with me.” “Evil spirit,” interposed Sir Michael, “this is no dominion of thine; thy power on earth is not of the nature thou imaginest; so cease and be counselled. The pit of perdition is thy kingdom, and nothing is

thine but torturing fire, and eternal misery.” “Thou sayest well,” exclaimed the Fiend, and, stamping with his foot, a flame gushed up from the shuddering ground so fierce and bright that it startled Sir James, who leaped back, drew his sword, and gazed upon the living fire. “There,” he said, “how dost thou like my servant, it will burn and destroy if I bid it.”

Sir Michael smiled, and, passing his naked hands through it, said, “This is but a harmless light; the sportive flame from whence elves form their elf-candles, and witches make their meteors to mislead and destroy.” And he stamped with his foot, and said, “Let the wildfire become one to burn and torment thee.” And the flame waxed tenfold more bright and fierce, and, encompassing the Demon, rose high around him, and he burst from it and fled; fled slowly and reluctantly with his face to his enemy, and commanding the fire to desist: but the flame would not be forbidden. Then he turned his back and fled, and thrice it chased him round the mound, and each time that he encircled it, a visible change came upon his person: he grew dark, deformed, and hideous, yet he uttered no complaint, neither did he beg any respite from pain. And Sir Michael said, “Fierce and obdurate spirit, I pity thee.” And as

he spoke, the fire was stayed, and vanished, and Lucifer restored to his original lustre, said, “Old serpent of the Tweed, great is thy power on earth, and mercifully at times dost thou use it. But come, even an evil spirit may be generous, may be kind, and can be true. The sun will soon arise, and I wish not his beams to find me here, descend with me therefore, into my dwelling, till the sun is come and gone, and we shall discourse more at large upon man, and his knowledge, and his nature till night returns to thy island, and then shall I send thee whither thou wilt.” And he stamped with both his feet, and the mound opened wide, disclosing a straight and pleasant way strewn under foot with small shells, and glittering sand, hung over head with spars and sparkling stones which shed on them a faint but useful light.

As they descended they saw before them a form bearing a torch, which threw a long stream of light behind, and they heard overhead the chafing and rolling of the ocean. And they came to a valley strewn with flowers, of all hues, and of all odours. They seemed growing and sending forth their young shoots; yet when touched they felt as hard as stone, and appeared to grow from jasper and marbles of the richest and rarest colours. In the middle of the vale there rose a temple, the roof of which was laid upon columns of

solid gold, and the steps which ascended to the porch were of silver, and the floor was composed wholly of precious stones. And there were seats—a fountain which played with the richest wine, and scented all the place, and a table loaded with the sweetest meats. It seemed as if all the princes of the earth had made themselves poor in building the temple, and in preparing the feast.

And when Sir Michael and Sir James saw all this they were astonished, and Lucifer said, “The gold, the silver, and the precious stones which ye behold are the riches for which nations have been sold, crowns purchased, and judgment bought. They were gathered here, and became so vast that they encumbered this valley; so I melted down the vessels of gold, the crowns the coronets, the mitres, the sceptres, the talents, and the coins, and from them this temple arose. And this banquet is ever here; the wine ever flows, and the table is ever full; sit down, therefore and eat, for from earth the feast comes, and your mortal natures require refreshment.” Sir James and his companion seated themselves, and blessed the wine and the food, and ate and drank, and were strengthened.

Then Satan said, “This is one of the seven ways to the bottomless pit, and it is only trodden by kings, and counsellors, and chief men.” And

Sir James said, "There are few footsteps visible, and these seldom trodden flowers, and this table heaped with untouched dainties tell that it is a road on which few walk." "Lo, you, there now Sir Knight," said Satan, "any one, from your words, may know that you are of power on the earth. We passed two kings, seven leaders of armies, and many counsellors and prime men of the world, on our way here, but I threw a cloud over them that you might not have the trouble of saluting them. This is, indeed, the most frequented way to hell, save the path by which the priests go, they have a way wholly to themselves. If any more divisions of religion happen on the earth, I must make an eighth road; for the present one, roomy as it is, will not contain them."

And Sir James smiled, and said, "What is become of thy pilgrims? I see none of all the numbers thou hast named, and yet I see all that the way contains." And Lucifer answered, "Look again," and he waved his hands as the other looked, and the way was thronged with men; proud of heart, designing of nature, bold of brow, and bloody of hand, they seemed. "I see many counsellors and leaders, said Sir James; of the princes of the earth I behold none." "Out of tenderness to thee, Sir Knight," said Lucifer, "I spread a veil over them; there, dost thou see

them now?" And Sir James started, for, seated at the same table, and eating of the same food, and drinking of the same wine, he beheld two crowned kings, with counsellors on their right hand and on their left, nor were the salutations and courtly observances of earth forgotten in outward show and silent gesture, for they uttered not a word, though much they looked on each other, and, most of all, on Sir James.

And Lucifer smiled, and said, "See! they know thee, Sir Knight, and they marvel exceedingly at beholding thee. Thou needst not ask them any questions, for nothing but sounds of sorrow and dolour will they utter in the regions below, neither can they hear a mortal voice any more, they are not clothed with the same flesh and blood which they had on earth, though they bear the express image which they had when living. Were speech to be suffered here we should have nothing but words, words; for seest thou how many eloquent counsellors are here, men who lived by honeyed words, and expressions which pleased the princes of the earth, sorely would they encrease the horrors of my punishment, could they pour out their eloquent sophistry."

And Sir James said, "Here are two kings, and counsellors without number; some fearful revolution has happened on earth when so many of its

mighty ones have come at once." "Earth is as tranquil as usual," replied the other; "only a little war, where one of these crowned persons met with an uncivil arrow; and only a little treason, where that other crowned person and all his sagacious companions had their throats very carefully cut. No! the world is exceedingly quiet at present, and I never saw so few of its rulers on the way to my dominions. But the people of the earth will soon, in their own good time and way, send me a dozen of crowned heads at once. There will be religious dissensions, of all dissensions the most profitable to me, for they teem with great events; such as battles where rulers are hewn down and shot, private conferences where kings and leaders are very coolly stabbed and poinarded, and solemn banquets where very satisfactory poison is mingled with the wine. There are many other occasions from which I receive subjects; priests with their terrors, doctors with their drugs, jealousy with its spiced cup, love with its disappointments, ambition with its crushed hopes, and genius with its repressed aspirations. But I wish not to trouble you with a catalogue of all matters which contribute to the population of my kingdom."

As Satan spoke, the kings arose with all their companions and continued their journey, and their place was speedily filled by others;

but there were no more crowned heads among them. "There seems to be a respite for the monarchs of the earth now," said Sir James; "Yes," replied Satan, "they must reign their brief space before I can have them, but it sometimes happens that fortune sends two or three candidates for the same crown, and then the sword comes to decide the right of blood, and the way glitters with princes and prelates, and dukes and other nobles. Thine own blessed little island has been prolific in crowned heads; in the south there was the contest with the Saxons, the Danes, and the Normans. I have seen three island kings fresh from the same battle field, all quaffing of my cup at once; then there was the fortunate contest between the houses of York and Lancaster; kings crowded all the way, and counsellors and mighty men were shouldering one another as at court. I was glad when might vanquished right, and gave me more variety, for princes were become so common that they out-numbered my fiends. There is one king whom I have expected daily, the monarch of Scotland, a sworn knight-errant; one who was so little of a king, that he refused to take his enemies at an advantage; a most royal fool, who, for the falset of a French dame, put himself in the way of the English arrows, and was shot down on Flodden-edge like a royal-buck in

season. Sir Knight, I honour the sword and lance, seeing that they have sent me many a good subject, and I love the man who, for the glance of a lady's blue eye, or the waving of her glove, will redden his lance in his brother's bosom merely for the delight of being hailed a knight good and true ; but I love still more the monarch who has himself, and his nobles, and his mighty men, regularly slaughtered, according to the rules of knight-errantry, like James Stuart of Scotland. What thinkest thou, Sir Knight?"

Sir James reddened cheek and brow, not with anger, but with vexation and shame, and it was thus he answered : "Alas ! I may say with the Word."

Now therefore, kings, be wise ; be taught
Ye judges of the earth ;
Serve God in fear, and see that ye
Join trembling with your mirth.

"What!" cried Satan, "hast thou, too, violated rules of the discreet church, which retains in her own hand the privilege of expounding the Word called Scripture, as it may suit her own views and her own wish for aggrandizement ? Hast thou eaten of the apple which humbled Eve ? hast thou thrown thyself body and soul into the flood of knowledge ? alas ! for thee, thou wilt be carried away by the stream, and seen no more." And Sir James made answer, "Where will knowledge

carry one? I see that ignorance fills the way to perdition, with ten thousand thousand souls."

"To the self-same place, Sir Knight," said the Fiend, "for it is neither knowledge, nor power, nor genius, which save mortal man, but uprightness of life, and purity of heart; benevolence which stirs itself, and universal love which joys in making others happy." "You are describing perfect man, in his brief hour of purity," said Sir Michael, "before he fell through woman and the serpent. I have wandered much on the earth, and made myself familiar with the hearts and actions of men; and, alas! Evil One, full well thou knowest that perfect purity is not given to aught less than God, and that he charges his angels with folly."

"I know," answered Satan, "that man is a worm, and unworthy the community of inspired spirits. But see, here they come; some of your men born again, who have been dipt in the stream of knowledge till their sense is drowned. You shall hear them speak, for if ignorance closes the lips, knowledge opens them." And there approached a man, grave, sedate, and thoughtful, with his arms folded over his breast, and a book clasped to his bosom." "Mortal," said Satan, "whence comest thou, and what claspest thou to thy bosom?" And the man answered, "I come from earth, whence all that is mortal springs, and the book in

my hand is one written of old, but now opened to the world. I have read in it things profitable, and worthy of being known. But who and whence art thou, that thou askest these questions?" "Alas!" said Satan, "we are poor benighted creatures, who are neither wholly in the world, nor yet out of it, and the joy and gladness which have fallen on man come like the sound of a thing afar off." "Then," said the stranger, "ye know not that man, through the light of knowledge, has made a glorious discovery?" "What has the creature man discovered?" said the Fiend, with a sneer. "He has discovered that all that man has hitherto believed in, and dreaded or ordered, is mere imagination and folly." "A goodly discovery man," replied the Fiend, "and thou art one of the unbelievers."

The man took his hand from his bosom, held it out before him, and said, "There, the length of that may man see, and no farther; he has deceived himself, and allowed his imagination to cheat his judgment. But praised be chance, and let accident be glorified; the lamp of knowledge is lit at length, and I have learned to doubt all, and believe nothing." "A worthy conclusion," said Satan, "the fruit of much research and study no doubt; and you believe in nothing?" "In nothing I believe," said he; "it is a dangerous ad-

mission to say, I believe aught.” “Aye!” replied the Demon, “what thinkest thou of this place, and for whom takest thou me?” “The earth has its wondrous places, and this is one of them,” said the unbeliever; “the earth has its wondrous creatures, and thou art one of them; but there is neither hallelujahs in heaven, nor sorrow in hell; the former is the pleasant imagining of the poet, the latter the invention of priests; and the Spirits to which human belief gives the rule of those visionary regions have been invented by kings and prelates to overcome and plunder the people. I believe not in them.”

“Keep thy belief whilst thou canst,” said Satan; “but to whom are we indebted for this new discovery?” “I speak to gross ignorance I see,” said the stranger, “and I must tell what the wide world knows. Mankind have a long while imagined that their belief was too ample, and that priests and monarchs claimed, under the authority of saints and revelations, more power over mankind than they had right to. So they gathered themselves together, and sent for kings and priests, and discussed the power of crowned and mitred heads; the source of right divine, and the authenticity of relics, and saints, and dispensations. And the kings waxed wroth, and the priests talked of heresy, hot irons, and

burning fires; then strong debate arose, there were swords drawn, and holy fathers quoted; one prayed, another vowed, and a third swore by Saint Peter's patience, and no man ever beheld such strange and varied controversy."

"And how did all this end?" inquired Satan; "what conclusion did the assembled wisdom of the earth come to?" "Of one worthy of it," said the unbeliever; "you shall hear. When I saw all this I arose, and prayed to be heard. 'Hear him,' cried one, 'he is learned, and knows that the dominion of Saint Peter is a true inheritance bequeathed by Christ, accepted by the Apostle, and now enjoyed in meekness and full power by his holiness the Pope, whom I pray the saints to bless.' 'Hear him,' cried a second, 'for he is wise, and knows that God sent his Son and his saints to reign in the world in the mortal body, while they lived, and by their relics after; hear him, for one so wise must put trust in Becket's bones, in the nail of the true cross, in the forefoot shoe of the holy ass, which has performed so many miracles for the good of mankind.' 'And hear him!' shouted a third, 'for he knows that the right of monarchs is a thing divine, descended from on high, which subjects dare not presume to question.' 'Hear him! I say hear him!' exclaimed a fourth; 'he will help us to extinguish

the apocryphal fires of purgatory, and rekindle those of hell, for why should sin have such an indulgence as mitigated punishment?' 'And I say hear him!' shouted a fifth, 'for he knows that the worship of this world is grown into eye-worship and idolatry; that man has set up his false gods in splendid temples, and fallen down and adored the work of his own hands.'

"And when I heard all this I rose, and said, talk not to me of princes power, or the church's belief, the whole is a matter of imagination; and I neither credit saint nor relic, but look to human reason for the rule which guides me in my devotion or my allegiance. 'I think,' said a man who stood beside me, 'that some light would be thrown upon this dark subject, were the holy and merciful church to indulge this man by burning him in a very bright fire composed of those books which have been opened, and quoted against the true belief.' And they all said, 'It is too much kindness to show to such an unbeliever, but the church is merciful, and will indulge this man, so bind him, and let the fire be kindled.' And so they took me, and bound me, and kindled the fire, and by its light they sat, and perused the fathers; and my body is in ashes, and I am here.' He spoke, and as Satan waved his hand he departed.

CHAPTER IX.

Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors,
My very noble, and approved good masters.

SHAKSPEARE.

“Now,” said Sir Michael, “I return to upper air; the future glory and happiness of mankind are weighed in the balance, and the titled, the interested, and the superstitious, sit in judgment upon liberty and knowledge. Now is the hour when I must appear and confirm the timid, daunt the bold, and blunt the sword of the fierce and the bloodthirsty. Spirit of Evil, if you desire not to sink into more awful punishment, seek not to check this new-born feeling, so worthy of God and of the human race.” “If I appear among the dignitaries of the earth,” answered Satan, “it shall be in peace, as I was wont to come of old, nor shall I seek to stimulate them to evil, for to evil they are ever prone; so see that ye blame me not for deeds of men’s doing. But go, go; you need not be told how to make your way back to the realms of light.” And Sir Michael

and Sir James ascended, all opposing substance seemed to cleave asunder before them; and when they felt the breezes of the earth blow night had fallen on the world, the moon was new risen, and the stars were in the sky.

And there came a dark and armed rider from a wild wood on their left hand, and he set a trumpet to his mouth, and blew a loud and vehement blast, all the ground shook, all the trees trembled, and he cried with a loud voice, “Come all ye people of the earth; come from city, village, hill, and lea; come and lift up your voices and draw your swords, for your holy religion is about to be overthrown, and the reign of the priests is about to expire.” And the people heard the voice, and they obeyed, and came forth armed for war, and they were a vast number. They clashed their swords upon their shields, and cried, “Where are they who desire to extinguish the blessed light by which we have so long guided our steps, that we may slay them. Where are they who seek to pull down the lofty edifice which the holy of the earth have reared, for we shall consume them with living fire.”

And there came another rider from the wood on their right hand, clothed in white, he was bare headed, his hair shone like the light of the sun, and the steed on which he rode seemed not to

touch the ground. And he called with a loud voice, saying, “ Come all ye people of the earth, come and receive instruction ; the light which leads not astray, even the light of heaven, will be poured out upon men, and ye shall see that ye have been worshipping stocks and stones, and honouring created flesh and blood as highly as the Holy One of heaven. Come all with me, ye people of the earth, for the Spirit of God has descended among men, and the dark hour of ignorance must submit to the sunshine.” And he waved his hand, and many looked, many admired, and but few followed. Ten thousand lights streamed from earth to sky, and a shout arose as of a mighty multitude.

Then Sir Michael said, “ This is the place, and this is the hour where and when the future glory of the sons of men shall be fixed and established ; but it will not be established without a contest and effusion of blood. Come with me, therefore, it is the duty of all men to peril their lives in this eventful contest ; man is left to the freedom of his own will, and the exertion of his natural energies of mind and body shall crush the spell with which craft and superstition have long oppressed the nations.” And Sir James followed, resolved to aid with heart and hand.

And they came to the gates of a great city,

where the rulers and the learned men of the earth were met: and there stood a fierce captain, with a sword in his hand, who said, “ Whence come ye, and in what do ye believe?” And Sir Michael answered, “ We come from the Isle of Britain, and we believe that God is just, and wise, and merciful, and that he made man to be a happy and a free creature.” “ That will not do, proud Islanders,” said the Captain; “ we admit no one here who doubts the traditions of the holy church, who believes not in her infallibility, who suspects the miracles wrought daily by the relics of the saints, who believes that bread is not flesh and wine is not blood, and doubts the doctrine of absolution and remission of sins.” And he held the point of his sword to the bosom of Sir Michael, his face grew dark, his eyes flashed, and the love of shedding blood came upon him.

Sir Michael laid his hand on the sword and turned it aside; and the Captain stood and gazed upon him, and said not one word, but hid his face with his hands, and went trembling away. And they went into the middle of the city, and there were many men met. And the temple in which the people were assembled was lofty and noble, and a vast multitude filled the whole interior. And Sir James saw a throne of gold, supported by four angels of the same metal, with a foot-stool

of silver, and over the throne hung a canopy starred with precious stones. And on the throne an old man sat bareheaded and barefooted, and around were seated many grave men, who all looked as he on the throne looked, and each held a scroll of parchment in his hand. And at the feet of the old man sat the princes of the earth, and their crowns lay at his feet, and their sceptres were taken from them. And before them sat the rulers of divers nations, who all looked towards him who sat on the throne, and did obeisance as if they had stood in the presence of an angel.

The old man on the throne held forth his hand, and all the people fell on their knees, and the princes of the earth fell on their knees also, bowing down their heads to the earth. And he said, “Bless ye, my pure and faithful children; believe, fast, pray, do penance, implore the saints, and pay the church its dues, and ye shall surely be saved.” And they all arose from their knees, and he clasped his hands over his bosom, and said, “I have summoned my people before me this day, for a thing has come to pass which has sorely grieved my spirit, and I fear that the protection of the saints will be withdrawn till we have atoned for the grievous and accursed sin. Know ye, that when the gospel of God had been preached on earth for

a time, and when the hearts and minds of men were full of the acts, and deeds, and sayings of the Apostles, that certain wise and holy men collected from tradition the sayings and sermons of the inspired, and wrote them in a book, and called that book the New Testament? And from this book the church continued to take the measure of its faith, and the rules of its practice, and it has been in high esteem among us. But man is a fallible and an erring creature; certain professors of the church imagined that they saw other meanings in the gospel than what their brethren believed, and there fell out a sore schism, and there was much trouble, and pious men were compelled to call in the sword to convince their brethren of the wisdom and accuracy of the church. And they were convinced or removed, and no one has dared to murmur dissent till the present unhappy moment.” And a priest came with incense in a golden dish, and fumed all the throne, and he who sat on it resumed his speech.

“ My children, I told you how the gospel came to the church, and how the church, through the blessing of the saints, and the sharpness of its sword, maintained uniformity of opinion, discipline, and belief. But it was not the sword alone which maintained it. The gospel was shut, as a sacred thing, from the eyes of the vulgar, who

would have esteemed too lightly the divine truths which it contained, while on the holy priesthood heaven devolved the burthen and the labour of expounding the word, and revealing Christ's meaning to man. Thus did we treasure up the blessed word, and it grew a fruitful and a profitable thing unto us, our church increased in splendour, and our order was so far blessed that its numbers were doubled ; and had it not been for the self-seeking of princes, this right foot of mine, which wears the sandal of Saint Peter, would have been pressed on the necks of all the monarchs of the universe, and the world would have known him whom the saints delight to honour." And he looked proudly down on the princes at his feet, and lifted his sandalled foot ; and all the people bowed, and muttered a brief prayer. He continued : " Alas ! my children, it was not the fault of the blessed church that this calamity has befallen you ; we held not the intoxicating cup unto your lips, and cried, ' Drink ! drink ! ' We concealed it from your sight ; but it can be no longer concealed. See ! behold the hand of a demon has multiplied the work, for the pen of man could not accomplish the miraculous task. And he held out a copy of the New Testament, beautifully impressed in black letter, and cried, ' Can this be the work of man's hand ; or has he not been aided

by a demon? How fair, how regular, how accurate, and how beautiful the letters are written, and the words disposed! I marvel, while I condemn the act by which it is produced, that an evil spirit had the patience to encounter so long a labour.' And the multitude of priests who were seated around dipped their hands in holy water, and took it, and handed it round and round, and said, ' It has been produced by an evil art, and ought to be consumed with fire.' And all the people shouted, ' Consume it! consume it!'"

And there stood up a youth amidst the people, who said, " I have read this gospel which ye condemn, and I have found it good. Has not the meekwise spirit which inspired it said, of his word, how he that runs may read. I have read, and I marvel not that the church dislikes it, seeing how changed she has become in her person, her conduct, and her attire, since the humble hour of her origin, when her foot was not on the neck of princes; neither did she dissolve the strength of men's oaths, nor the duty which one owes to another; neither did she call upon man to worship saints of silver and gold, nor did she sell heaven for money, nor wash the hand of the murderer and the parricide. Blessed, therefore, be the hour when the word of God was multiplied amongst us; and blessed be the head, that discovered the

sacred art of increasing knowledge, and the right hand that had the cunning to execute what the head conceived." And all the meeting gazed astonished upon the youth, and the Pontiff said, mildly, "Thou hast thy wish, fair son. Thou knowest the punishment which the church inflicts on those who mock her discipline, and doubt her belief. Thou hast done both, and thus sinning with thy eyes open, thy wish was to offer thyself a victim. The victim cannot be refused. Bind him therefore, and clothe him in the garb which the merciful church has invented for the punishment of heretics, and lead him to the door of this cathedral, and burn him with fire. Pleasant and acceptable to us is the smell of a roasted heretic." And an hundred men drew their swords, and rushed forward to seize and bind the youth. And he said, "I have not mocked your discipline, nor doubted your belief: I have told you that scripture is at variance with the church, and the more I read the less can I discern the resemblance. Did Christ command you to crown and uncrown kings? Did Christ command you to establish another place of punishment, and raise contributions upon the fears and the repentance of mankind? Did Christ tell you to pray in a language which those who heard you could not understand?"

Did he desire you to create another race of gods, and honour them more than the Almighty? And did he tell you to impose on the world with imaginary miracles? If this book be the word of God, and if it contain the rules for faith, obedience, and practice, we want a church on the earth; for assuredly that of Rome resembles not the church of Christ."

" Fair son," said the Pontiff, " hast thou made thy peace with the saints, whom thou hast impugned, or with the Saviour, whose wisdom in the establishment of our church thou hast doubted? for thy hour is come." And he made a sign for the guards to seize him, and they rushed forward.

" Most holy and most learned Father," said another youth, rising up, " will your holiness give me the words which Christ used when he ordered those who believed not his doctrines to be put to death? And will you repeat his commands to Saint Peter, of whom you claim to be the successor, to draw the sword, and use it for the destruction of his enemies? I have looked in vain in the scripture for a warrant to bear out your power in ordering a fellow-creature to die." " And whilst your holiness is searching," said another youth, " for these texts, you may perhaps find where it is written, that the word of God is to remain as a book shut, and as a fountain sealed." " Or," said

Sir Michael, “the Priest of Rome may read us Christ’s command for a monk to become a temporal prince, and bear a sceptre in his hand, and a mitre on his brow.”

The eyes of the priests wandered from side to side, dwelling on the person of each new adversary as he arose, and the Pontiff began to dread that the questions which were asked were opening the eyes of many. He was conscious, too, that the printed scriptures were widely circulated, and that thousands of thousands were even then comparing the word of God with the practice and belief of the church, and marvelling at the fearful difference. He knew not what to say, he knew not what to do; his soldiers were dismayed at the extent of the disaffection, and the strength of their adversaries; and he was afraid to condemn the scriptures, and punish those who avowed open heresy.

An old man came to the Pontiff’s side, with a beard which reached to his girdle, as white as the winter snow, and a look of meekness and holiness. “Holy hermit of Loretto,” said the Pontiff, “I bid you welcome, and in your coming, I own the hand of heaven. Lo! here are bold and shameless heretics, who openly profess their faith to be different from our holy church, and with arms in their hands, and subtle arguments in their mouths,

defy the power of our merciful church. But be seated, most holy man. We heard, alas ! that the angel of death had summoned you. Blessed be the hour of your recovery, for you come to support and save the church."

Low bowed the venerable hermit, and looking mildly up, answered, " Men indeed thought my spirit departed, and on the third day they bore my frail body to the grave, but as they laid me in the ground, the dust of a Saint, whose repose they had disturbed, fell upon my garment, and I awoke whole, and walked home, blessing the people by the way, and working miracles with the dust of the saint. And as the people followed me, shouting and rejoicing, and bringing their halt and their lame that I might make them whole, there came a man, a holy one, saying, " Is not this the day on which the Church has to hold a contest with the evil spirit of reformation, which has come abroad upon the earth, and will you tarry here, curing the incurable, and making the speechless speak, when the church is about to be struck with irrecoverable leprosy; when the plague spot of change is about to come upon her, and she will forgive sin, and give men a place in heaven, no more ? " And there followed a long and loud acclaim from the assembled people, and all the priests rejoiced in their new and unlooked for apostle.

. And when he saw that the looks of all men were upon him, his eyes waxed bright, his form dilated, he walked in among the princes and rulers of the earth, and holding up his hand, he thus proceeded: “And who said that change was coming upon the church, and that the hour of her glory was gone? I say unto you, that the holy church is hale and thriving, that her power is increasing, her usefulness becoming more manifest, and that her professors, yea those around me, are ready as they were of yore to prove her purity and truth by martyrdom and miracles. Look all ye who are thick of sight, and dull of understanding, for I shall make a miracle manifest. Look at this blessed dust, I found it in the grave of Saint Sibertus; behold when I throw it into the air, it will purify your sight, and enable you to behold the watchers, the holy ones, who are come from above, to preside over the church, and its faithful children, the priests; look, and be convinced.”

And the hermit threw something into the air, which glimmered like water falling through sunshine, and filled all the place with a wild and momentary light. But momentary as the light was, the princes, priests, and people beheld two pure and mighty spirits standing one on the right hand, and one on the left, with swords which shone like lightning in their hands, and incon-

ceiveable glory encompassing their brows. Then the princes, priests, and people, fell on their faces, and when they arose, the supernatural light had departed from the hall, the holy watchers were no longer visible, and the hermit cried, with a loud voice, “ Who doubts the infallibility of the Holy Church now? who seeks to cause her from being the meet companion of saints and angels to become a scorn and a reproach? See ye not, O ye young men, who desire change, what deeds the dust of her saints can do? See ye not how gloriously she is attended? Miracles usher her in, and angels are her hand-maidens.”

“ Holy hermit,” said the Pontiff, “ thy words and thy deeds are most worthy; by what name shall I remember so much learning and holiness.—Famé and sanctity, when the yspoke of thee, called thee the holy man of Loretto; but thou hast a name, a baptized name; the saints are not too numerous, and they will be honoured by thy company.” Meekly and lowly the hermit bowed, laid his hands on his breast, and shook a head as white as the snow of the desert, as he said, “ Most holy and infallible father, I am but a worm compared to thee; the hand of him above, has been sore upon me; and I have lived in caves and in desert places, for I would not look Him, whom I have not served aright, in the face. I am called

by divers names, for I have been a wanderer over the world; some men fear me, and some men love me; I am in danger of being bound by one nation and thrown into the lake of fire, while in another, they worship me, and call me by many endearing names. But the name which I esteem the most is that by which I am known in an humble country called Scotland; men there call me ‘Symmie;’ and truly I love the appellation, and wish for no other.”

“ Saint Symmie,” said the Pontiff, “I love and esteem the name; it is sweet and well-sounding, and adds a new name to the calendar of saints; so welcome, Saint Symmie. Brethren,—remember henceforward that this day is to be held in reverence; a double penance must be done, when it returns.” “ So please your reverence,” said a priest, “ another saint has possession of this day, a saint of old standing.” “ We will give the old saint another day, my son,” said the Pontiff; “ and let our child have this. The old saints work no miracles now for the church, and we must encourage those who do.” There was great applause, and all men’s eyes were fixed upon Saint Symmie; but no one regarded him with a more fixed and steady look than Sir Michael; of this he seemed unconscious or careless.

“ Fair son,” said the Pontiff, “ there has been

an evil thing done on the earth ; the Scriptures which Christ confided to his chosen few to expound to the sons of men, have escaped into public notice, and with such wicked speed have they been promulgated, that in every man's hand there is a copy. Full well thy wisdom knows that such strong meat is not fit for babes, and that those who read therein, without the accompanying comment of the holy church, shall surely die. By some magic or unknown art, has this been done, for the pens of an hundred thousand men all moving as swiftly as they flew when in the wild swan's wing could not have done it. Behold ! see what a fair volume wickedness has made." And he presented the printed Scriptures to the hermit, who drew back his hand, and said, " My hand shall not be defiled by that work, no one can tell whence it comes. Yet it is fair and beautifully done. But look on this splendid book ; it is the most holy record of the wondrous works of the church ; here are the miracles, and legends, and deeds, and traditions, and visions, from the days when Paul was beheaded, even until now. See how regular and fair it is ; and its margin is illuminated by figures forming a visible representation of the things contained therein. See when it is opened, there is a light diffused over all the place."

And he opened the Book of Church Legends, and

a light seemed to rise from the illuminated margins ; it was handed from prince to priest, and from priest to noble, and they all marvelled at its exceeding beauty. Then the hermit said, “ Of this fair volume I have ten thousand equally fair, for there is no art belonging to a creature inferior to him above, unknown to me, and the church deserves the use of all my knowledge.” And as he spoke every man found a volume in his hands, and they marvelled at their beauty, and exclaimed, “ Blessed be the day of Saint Symmie. May he save and rebeautify the holy church.”

And the Pontiff arose, and said, “ Ye have beheld all these wondrous things, ye people desirous of change ; and are ye not satisfied of the divine power of God’s holy church ? Are ye not assured by sensible signs and manifest miracles, that heaven governs and guards us ? Be mute, therefore ; bow yourselves down ; believe and depart.” And all the people, save a few, shouted, and held up the book of church miracles and legends in their hands, and cried, “ Long live the pure and immaculate church, and long live the holy Saint Symmie, and may saints and miracles be so multiplied, that there will not be a day for man’s labour, nor cause for human toil. Even in time the clouds may rain wine, and the wind waft us garments, and the earth shoot up bread and food.”

And Sir Michael stepped forward, and said, “ I shall not be mute, neither shall I bow, nor yet will I believe and depart. I have heard many words, prompted by an evil inspiration, and I have witnessed many miracles which were wrought, not of God but of the fiends. O unwise and ignorant people ! will ye reject the holy and inspired Scriptures, and yet greedily accept the false miracles, the lying legends, and profane traditions of a church which rewards the worthless inventors with the name of holy one, and saint ? Can ye put trust in the monstrous volume of legends ; a work invented solely for the establishment of the church as an engine of torture for the human mind ; as an instrument of plunder in the matter of human possessions, and for the purpose of enabling the sandalled foot of a priest to tread on the necks of anointed princes ? Cast the book down and tread it in the dust, for it is utterly worthless, false, and vain.” And there arose a terrible cry of “ Stone him, stone him ; he is a blasphemer ; one who denies the glory of Christ ; one who scorns his blessed mother ; one who denies the saints ; mocks miracles ; disbelieves wonders ; and, what is worse, calls the high the holy, and the infallible Father a sandalled priest. Stone him, therefore, stone him.”

And the Pontiff said, “ Fair son, one word with thee. Our cause is sustained, as thou hast seen,

by angels ; confirmed, as thou has witnessed, by miracles ; and supported by men raised from the dead expressly for the purpose of vindicating our glory and our power. What hast thou to oppose to these overwhelming proofs ? Speak, and thou shalt be heard ; show wonders and we will feel thy power ; work miracles, and we will say thou art worthy of ranking next in glory with the church of the true God, and the holy saints.”

Sir Michael answered, “ You ask for miracles, and we show you Scripture ; those who will not credit the word of God, how can they esteem the deeds of men ? In that holy book are contained the rules of Christian faith and obedience ; we read it, we study it, and in its pure and undeviating balance we weigh your church with all its incumbrance of miracles, legends, and opinions, and beliefs. We ask for no indulgence but liberty to read that book. Full well the glorious inspirer knew that those who should read it aright, honour him worthily, and worship him wisely, would be free from civil bondage, and all the chains which superstition and tyranny could heap upon free-born man. Alas ! look at the wide world, there man is imprisoned body and soul, and the priests and princes keep the key, yet they cannot keep it without quarrelling.”

The Pontiff replied, “ When the Sciptures are unclasped, ten thousand new opinions will be let

loose among men. All who read and study will interpret the Word according to his own wisdom, will set up a God in his own heart, and build a church in his own belief, and Christendom will be soon deluged by the multitude of its sects, whom doctrine, discipline, and doubt shall divide. O I weep for the holy undivided church ! when men are left to expound the Word as they will. What will become of the holy children of the church who save the world by their prayers, when this sweeping reformation draws his sword ? Alas, for priests ! and alas, for princes ! The glory of the monarchs of the earth will be shorn, and they will be cast down, as the evil angels were, into Tophet, never to rise again."

" And who shall weep for their fall, or long for their rising," said Sir Michael, " if they are not worthier than monarchs have been for many centuries ? What is a king, that he should be above the law, and answerable only to God, or to a presumptuous church for his actions ? Who gave him command over the bodies of men ? Who put bridles in men's lips and saddles on their backs, and set kings upon them, booted and spurred, to ride ? But the hour is come ; for what is decreed shall come to pass. Then all your splendid superstitions shall dissolve away ; then priests shall be checked amid their presumptuous career, and princes be

taught that there is a prince greater than they are, namely, knowledge."

And there arose a great murmur in the assembly, and many cried out, "Stone him, stone him! he is unworthy to live. Burn him at the stake, and let him be consumed by the books which he has praised, for he has preferred the Gospel to the book of the holy legends and traditions of the saints and martyrs." And the old hermit smiled grimly, and said, "An honest judgment and an inspired one. Sieze him, and let him not go for all his charmed words, but bind him with bonds of iron and consume him with living fire." And ten thousand people cried, "He has judged aright; can he who has risen from the dead condemn unjustly; seeing he has been sent by the saints, and that the pope has canonized him?"

And Sir Michael looked on the hermit, and said, "Thou most pious and holy person, great cause hast thou to hate the Scripture and obstruct the light. I see it delights thee to think that thou hast established thy fame as a worker of miracles, and a holy person, and that thy name shall descend among the true and imaginary worthies of the church. But nothing can stand, unless it be of God, and thy holiness and thy miracles shall be pulled down and thou shalt be shown in thy fallen

state, and all who behold thee shall know there is a God in heaven.”

And as he spoke he held up his hands, and from his hands there arose a stream of light, which filled all the cathedral with its glory. And the people wondered; but they marvelled more, when their eyes were opened, and they beheld seven swart and terrible spirits standing where their princes and priests sat, and two light and ethereal spirits stood on either side of Sir Michael, each with a sacred volume opened in his hand. And all the people trembled, for the dark spirits seemed seeking whom they might devour, and he who came as a holy hermit looked tenfold more dark and terrible than they, and a smile of scorn and gladness dilated his gloomy features.

Then Sir Michael said, “ In whom have you put your trust, O ye princes and priests of the earth!—even in the unholy and condemned spirits. You have listened to their romantic tales—you have given credence to their sinful legends, and the Spirit of Evil has obtained power over you, and your love of dominion has made you canonize the high priest of Tophet. Look around, and tremble for the consequences of your ambition and credulity. Having imposed on the whole earth, and on many generations of wise and virtuous men, you have in your turns been imposed upon, to

the danger of your own souls. Why welcome you not your new associate? there he stands, with the mask of external sanctity pulled off him. What think you of your brother saint? Call upon him to work some new miracle, as a proof of his faith. He said he rose from the grave to befriend you. I say, he came from the pit, to enslave your bodies and destroy your souls. Conjure him away if you can, show him your relics, sprinkle him with holy water, absolve his seven ministering spirits of their oath of allegiance, deprive him of his infernal crown, and send him, as you have sent the proudest monarchs of the earth, to mourn his lost glory in some lonely place." And he folded his arms over his bosom, and eyed the Fiend with a stern and steady glance.

A dark cloud suddenly came over the city, and with the cloud there were hail, and rain, and fire, and a low and moaning wind came rushing along the aisles, which waved the banners on the walls, the golden surcoats over the warriors tombs, and extinguished the torches which flashed from arch to arch, and from aisle to aisle; yet utter darkness fell not over the assembled people. There rose still a faint and glimmering light from where Sir Michael stood, which gave the whole church, with all its tombs, and screens, and arches, to the eye; and there might men see the pale and

alarmed faces of the priests and princes, and the expanded form of the Fiend glancing scorn and anger over all.

Now there rose a Friar of orders gray, a little man and a bold one, who had wandered Europe over, and knew the ways of men, and had braved the earl in his hall, and the king on his throne, and conceived himself equal to a contest with Satan. The Friar walked up boldly to where the dark Form stood, and taking some holy water in the palm of his hand threw it upon his sable antagonist. The Form dilated. The Friar took a crooked nail from his box of relics, and saying, “ Fly at the touch of a nail from the hind foot shoe of the blessed ass which bore Jesus into Jerusalem.” He held it up, but the Form grew more and more. “ This feather,” said he, “ is from the wing of the Angel of the Annunciation, found lately on Mount Lebanon : nothing evil can withstand it.” And he waved the feather in the air, but the Form regarded it not, and waxed darker and more terrible. Then the Friar was wroth, and said, “ Either these holy relics are apocryphal, or they have lost their original power ; but, alas ! in my unworthy hands they may refuse to do deeds of virtue, or work miracles. Holy Father, whose hands are so worthy as thine to em-

ploy the spiritual relics of the church against the enemy of mankind ? Behold this pebble ! with this the blood of the apostle Saint Stephen was shed. See ! it is dyed yet with his precious blood. Thrice has it seen the sun and wind since that atoning day ; and thrice has it wrought miracles. Fly, false Spirit ! ” And hurling the stone at the Form as he spoke, it seemed to fly through the dark shape, and fell in a distant aisle ; yet still the Form waxed more vast and fearful, and the multitude would have fled, had they not been restrained by fear and awe.

And when the Friar saw that holy relics were of no avail against the obstinacy of the Fiend, he snatched up the book of church legends and miracles, and unclasping it, held it open before him ; but the Fiend regarded it not. Then the Friar read the legend of Saint Anton, how he wrestled with a fiend three days and three nights, and conquered him, and despoiled him of a brazen claw and his flint horn ; but the Form fled not. Next the Friar read the story of Saint Margaret : how an Evil Spirit wooed her in the form of a noble cavalier, but fled when he came before the altar, and left an ambrosia behind him, which is smelt still by the very devout in the chancel of the church. The Fiend seemed to grow to the spot. Then the Friar read the legend of Saint Basilius :

how he was tempted in his youth with a sore temptation, and fled into the wilderness to avoid the alluring loveliness of woman. And he read how he whipped his body, till the blood dyed the forest grass; yet nature still rebelled. How he took porcupines to his bosom, yet his dreams were unholy; and how he made a true-love of snow, and overcame in her company the overboiling vehemence of youth.

And Satan looked at the volume, and laughed scornfully, and said, “Fools! fools! that book contains not one word of truth from beginning to end. But what fiend, or what man, could endure to hear it read? All the holy dulness of the church for a thousand years is contained in it; and though my eyes are immortal, they would deceive me into slumber ere six legends were read. Friar, thou hast vanquished me.” And the Fiend and darkness fled away together; and all the priests sang a song of rejoicing, and all the people shouted, “Blessed is the true faith, and blessed are the holy legends, for they aid the priests in giving slumber to their congregations, and compel to sleep the wakeful eyes of the fiends of the pit.”

CHAPTER X.

Your vessels and your spells provide,
Your charms, and every thing beside ;
Great business must be wrought ere noon :
Upon the corner of the moon
There hangs a vaporous drop profound ;
I'll catch it ere it come to ground ;
And that distill'd by magic sleights,
Shall raise such artificial sprites,
As by the strength of their illusion,
Shall draw man on to his confusion.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN the Spirit of Evil departed, uprose the Friar of orders gray, his face was radiant with joy; and, with both hands extended towards the east, he cried, “Blessed henceforth be all relics, whether of stone or of steel, of bone or of brass, of hair or of feathers, for the might of the saints is with them. And thrice blessed be the holy legends, and traditions, and miracles of the infallible church, this day they have wrought a strange deliverance to man. There stood the Arch-enemy, conjured up by the wicked spirit of specious learning which has appeared in our land; there he stood, the enemy

of salvation, and it seemed as if the application of holy relics only gave him an increase of strength. But blessed be the legend-book: when I read its holy pages, the gigantic spirit began to roll himself together, and ere the third legend was concluded, there came a strong stupor, a terrible drowsiness upon him, and had he not fled he would have fallen asleep and been bound at the altar, and the triumph of the church would have been complete. As it is, blessed be these slumbrous legends; they have caused the refreshing dews of sleep to fall upon many an eye, and have wrought to-day a great deliverance."

Then there arose one of the Princes of the earth, with a crown on his head, a sharp sword in his hand, and he bowed thrice, and said, "Most holy and infallible father, our blessed faith and holy church have had a signal triumph this day over the spirits of hell and heresy. Leave not the good work half done; hell is put to flight, to be vanquished at another hour. Heresy is in our hands, let us bind her with iron bands, and give her body to the fire." And another Prince arose, and waving his sword, said, "The sword is drawn in righteous anger, let not tender mercy sheath it. The spilt blood of a heretic is useful to the church, and an acceptable thing to the saints; let us smite, slay, and destroy." And there arose a mighty shout,

and a thousand swords flashed in the air, and a thousand tongues cried, “ Let us smite, and slay, and cleanse the earth of the pestilence of heresy.”

But Sir Michael said, “ Princes and Priests, hear me—war not against the word of God, shut not your eyes against the light of wisdom and the glory of learning. It will be your profit now and your joy hereafter, to advance before the spirit of the times, and welcome it into your palaces, and cities, and churches. An invention which seems to be an interposition of heaven, has begun to unloose to us the sealed-up wonders of the world. The words of God and the preachings of the Apostles are now open to all men’s eyes, and the gigantic genius of the earth will shake off the bonds of ignorance, and speak and act as a god. Be counselled therefore, ye monarchs, and be warned, ye priests; it is not the church’s fires nor the princess words that can stem the torrent which comes gushing over the nations of the earth.”

“ The Heretic has said enough,” answered the Pontiff, rising from his throne; “ bind him—he dies. Behold I stretch my paternal hands over my children, and scatter gladness over you, and multiply joys upon your heads. Be stedfast, and be stern; a change is coming among men foretold by the church, and terrible will be the struggle, and numberless will be the glorious martyrs.

Hell to him who flies, and heaven to him who does battle manfully and spares not. It is not by prayer, by the intercession of saints, by the power of holy relics, nor by the voice of the father of the infallible church, that your enemies are to be conquered. No, they acknowledge no power but that of force, for they scorn tradition, they smile at legends, they disbelieve miracles ; therefore up and upon them, my children, with fire and with sword ; and he whose hands are dyed deepest in blood is the most righteous of ye all. Bind that arch Heretic, I say, for he dies."

And Sir Michael threw a wild light into the air, which dazzled the eyes of the soldiers, and they became as men blind, and they held out their hands, and groped darkling around them, but found not him whom they sought. And when the priests saw this they were much troubled, and said one unto another, " Who is this man, and whence comes he ? " And there arose an aged Priest, who looked around him, and replied, " I know him well, he comes from the Heretical Isle, and is far known and famed for his knowledge, his wisdom, and his skill transcending human. From every herb under heaven has he extracted healing medicine ; for every creature under the sky has he found an use ; he knows the influence of every star, the winds obey his bidding, he stays the rush-

ing of the waters, and he commands the fiends who are permitted to wander on the earth, and gives them work to do, useful to man. He can open the earth and take out its hoarded gold ; and the good spirits love him, and the evil fear him, and his name is heard of in every clime.”

Pale the Priests grew when they heard this, and they said one to another, “ This man by his magic has done all this ; let him be taken and slain. By his knowledge he accuses us of ignorance ; by his control over the spirits of darkness he usurps our power ; and by his seeking to illuminate the multitude whom we have so long kept blindfolded, he seeks to seduce our subjects from their allegiance.” But when they looked for him they saw him not. And they said, “ Let us follow.” The assembly dissolved, princes and priests retired, vowing to maintain a church which could not err, a doctrine which was infallible, and to pursue the new heresy with fire and sword.

When Sir Michael left the city, he retired into a wild wood which stretched from the gate far into the country, and the way was narrow, and the trees closed high over head. And when he had advanced a little way, Sir James saw standing beneath three fair oak trees which, springing from one stem, rose high into the air, two milk white horses, and their saddles were mounted with gold, and the bridle bits were of silver, and the

shoes which were on their feet shone like burnished steel. And their tails flowed to the ground, and their manes hung in armfuls from their necks; and when they saw Sir Michael they neighed, as if they welcomed their master.

And Sir Michael approached them slowly, and said, "Pure and beautiful creatures, we accept your aid, and think ourselves favoured by this kindness." And laying his thigh over the first he came to, he rode, followed by Sir James, slowly through the forest. They came to a running stream which crossed the way, and Sir Michael slackened his bridle and said, "Come my anxious and laborious servant, and tell me what thou art about to do?" And as he moved his hand in the air, a wild laugh startled the ring-doves on the trees, and Brunelfin appeared mounted on a miserable looking steed, with his face towards the tail, his long berry brown locks glittered with wild lights, and in his hand he held a rod, on the end of which a meteor gleamed, and ever as his horse became restive, or slackened its pace, he scared it onwards with his staff, and made the creature skip and moan, and tremble.

"Master Michael," said this singular rider, staying his willing steed, "I am come hither to guard and protect you. For many years you have been my friend, and though I have sought to re-

pay your kindness by submission and obedience, I am yet fearfully in arrear ; but the time is at hand when I can show you my affection in my own way; hearken, your enemies are pursuing you.” And Sir Michael listened, and he heard the hurried trampling of horses, the clang of iron scabbards, and the eager command to mind no obstruction, but hasten onwards. “ These are thy enemies,” said the Elf, “ and they come accompanied by priests, so that when they take thee, they may have the assistance of men conversant with arts of cruelty to aid them in torturing thee. Thou canst foil them I know; but, Master, leave them to me; ride thou onward, as if nothing moved thee; I love to amuse myself with priests. Hilloa ! there are kings too ; but the higher the rank the pleasanter the sport. Now shall I amuse the priests and the princes.” He turned himself sideways on his horse ; now to the head, and then to the tail, and made many strange faces, like one practising a wild and fanciful look to amuse or alarm travellers. “ Well, Elfin,” said Sir Michael, “ in thy hands I leave the priests and kings of the earth ; see and amuse them according to their merits.” He rode slowly onward, accompanied by Sir James ; while Brunelfin remained in the middle of the woodland path.

The princes, knights, and priests, who fol-

lowed Sir Michael to take and slay him, came furiously onward, and when they arrived where Brunelfin sat, the leader, a prince, with a helmet on his head, and his crown above his helmet, imagined the whole way to be filled with armed men, and exclaimed, “ Make way knaves ! make way ! Why fill the road with swords and lances, and with bills and carabines ? ” And he waved his sword, and spurred his horse, but the horse stood as still as if it had been made of bronze; and a priest laying his hand on the monarch’s bridle, said, “ Peace, Sir King, and put up your sword ; there is no body of armed men, but a glorious vision of saints, ascending and descending from earth to heaven, and from heaven to earth.” And throwing himself from his mule, he knelt on the ground, and held up his hands, and prayed loud and fervently. “ Father Eustace,” said a monk, “ what has possessed thee ? there is no vision of saints, but a band of fierce plunderers, who have sacked our holy church, and carried off our gods of silver, and our gods of gold, as a spoil and a prey. Lo ! I behold in the sacrilegious hands of one of the spoilers, my piece of the holy manger which was won from a troop of wild Arabs during the first crusade.” And he prayed that the sword might be speedy and sharp which avenged him of

those who respected not the holy and consecrated things of the church.

To these were added the exclamations of innumerable tongues to retire, advance, pray, pursue, and strike. “They are but fifty, and we are a thousand,” cried a Knight, and he struck at the imaginary band of enemies with his lance; the long lance quivered in the shaft of one of the trees, and the wild birds sprang from their roosts on its branches. “Touch them not! touch them not!” said a monk, drawing a crucifix from his bosom, and praying loudly, “they are not of this world, and from whatever art they come they may do us an ill turn.” Amid all this varied counsel was heard the voice of an old gray-headed priest, who cried ever, “Are ye mad, my masters? Are ye demented, my children? Of what are ye afraid? Of a brown Elf seated on the back of a sorry nag, moping, and mewing, and grinning upon you?” But no one regarded his words, for in all eyes, save his, the whole forest, and forest-path, were filled with spirits or with warriors.

At last one of the Princes couched his lance, and cried, “Ha! art thou there, thou treason hatcher; I thought thou wert dead, and in the cold grave, with as much mortal poison in thy body as would have sauced the cups of six privy counsellors.” And he aimed a stroke, which was

resisted only by the yielding air. A Priest exclaimed, “What! art thou come from the fires of purgatory to reproach me with selling thee a nook in the kingdom of heaven for a fair estate?” And he turned his head away. To the conscience of all present was presented at one and the same moment, the express image of those whom they had slain basely, or wronged deeply; some braved the sight with a fierce look, and others hid their faces in their hands; and two princes, and seven priests menaced their victims, and exculpated themselves from having wronged or harmed them.

Brunelfin all the while sat laughing at the awe-struck multitude. At every change of his posture, a change of scene was presented; a battle field; a burning city; a field of graves; a lofty and impassable mountain, a roaring sea, and a lake of devouring fire were all before them in succession, and there seemed no end to the varieties of annoyance and opposition. “Alas!” said a Priest, “since learning and heresy appeared in the land we have witnessed many such enchanted scenes as this; the fiends hold rule where holy men held sway, and the reign of the saints is at an end.” “Of a truth,” added a King, “since the remissness of the church allowed the people to think of civil rights and freedom, we have had little peace, for every one comes with his new form,

of government, the old ties which bound man to man are loosed, familiar spirits, and evil beings are let loose upon the earth, and here have they arrayed themselves against us to-night.” “Nay, blame not the church,” Sir King, said a Prelate; “the church has warred long and zealously against freedom, and against the powers of darkness; but rather blame the remissness of your lives; your dissolute manners; your scorn of all things holy; your gluttony in eating up the substance of the church; and your indulgence with the wives and daughters of your nobles; these are the things which have called down the wrath of heaven upon our land, and loosed the fiends of hell.”

The invective of the Prelate was cut short by the mace of a warrior, which, descending on his shoulder, struck him down to the neck of his mule, and thus the soldier vindicated his rudeness: “Cursed priest, will you rail against the Lord’s anointed? Have you no sense of shame upon you, and will you speak, too, of gluttony and lewdness? Ah! you have forgotten when you mulcted a poor soldier of a month’s pay for caressing one of your sighing sisters through the convent grate. But I have not forgotten it.” A scuffle instantly ensued, for the priests were privily armed; under their religious cloaks they wore shirts

of mail, and their retainers were armed to the teeth. Blows fierce and dangerous were exchanged, and priest and prince fought a hardy battle, while Brunelfin sounded the charge through a fairy instrument, till the woods and mountains trembled with the magic sound.

During the contest a cloud descended upon the forest, so densely rolled the darkness, that they could no longer see one another; and they all stood and wondered, for they had never seen such gross darkness before. And there appeared unto the priests, and to them alone, a pillar of light, and in the light they saw the form of a holy man waving them onward, and so they all spurred their mules, and followed the enchanted light. And the light moved slowly and beautifully for a time, and the ground over which it rolled seemed strewn with the most fragrant flowers. And the priests all shouted, “Lead on holy, holy light,” and they followed, and shouted and followed, till the stars of midnight shone, and they heard the roaring of the sea.

And they all said, one unto another, “I wish this light may be for our good; hear ye not the sound of the tumbling sea?” And they still followed, till all at once they found themselves walking on a quivering quick-sand, and at every step their mules sank fetlock deep; and they

looked behind them, and the thick clouds rolled ; and they looked before them, and there rushed the sea. And they were in sore perplexity, for they beheld the foaming tide coming with the speed of a race-horse three feet deep abreast, and they turned their bridles ; but as they turned the water struck them, and scattered them on its surface as it floats the feathers which the wild-fowls plume from their bosoms. And they looked in despair for the pillar of light and the holy man, but the light and the holy man were no longer there, and they beheld, instead, the face of a laughing fiend shining along the waters, bearing a death-light, and they called on man for help, and man was not nigh to save them, and they cried on their saints for aid, and a voice answered from the waters, “Ye cry wisely, for they are saints of wood.” And with that the sea left them drenched in its brine, and half dead with terror as the day began to dawn.

“ Mercy on us,” exclaimed a fisherman, who came to the bank to examine his nets, “mercy on us, here be a glorious band of shipwrecked wretches. The sea thought them unworthy of a grave, and we must find them a place on land, for they have gold crosses and silver saints about their necks good store.” And he turned the handle of his oar upon the bosom of the nearest, and

bestowed a blow upon him with such right-good will, that the prelate lay stretched on the sands.” “Hold, comrade,” said a brother fisherman, “these men are priests. Lord be near us, have ye dared to lift your hand on one who has a grant from the saints of enjoying all that the earth contains. We shall be slain—we shall be burnt; slay an earl, destroy a king, or cut a brother’s throat, for these things have their price in the great market of the church; but the life of a priest is beyond all price.” And they threw down their oars, and fled no one knew whither.

Nor did the princes and warriors fare better than their companions. A more unbridled hatred seemed let loose against them. They heard a trumpet, and then the rushing of war-horses, and the voice, as of a fierce warrior, directing the attack: “Come on, and charge these tyrants of the world with your war-spears. Spare them not, for they are sensible of pain like yourselves; they have oppressed, they have trodden on the necks of men, and now is the time to teach them that God made all men equal, and all men free.” And though the princes and their followers saw nothing, they felt as if a fierce and sultry wind rushed against them, and they dropt breathless from their saddles, while their horses broke loose, and ran wildly through the green forest.

And when they rose they imagined they saw before them armed men. But when they made a thrust, or struck a stroke, they found resistance only from the empty air, and they advanced, pressing fiercely on their visionary assailants, while the forest boughs crashed as they went, and the wild-fowls started from their roosts for a mile around.

When they had chased their imaginary enemies from the forest, a splendid city arose before them with all its spires, towers, and palaces, while its brazen gates glittered amid the dewy night. A loud sound was heard within its walls, and its palaces were set on fire, and its towers were thrown down, and its brazen gates were cast open by armed and bloody hands, and a fierce and angry multitude came rushing out. And all the people cried aloud, “We have thrown down the strong holds of the oppressor, we have consumed his palaces with fire, and we have crushed his fortified places. Come, therefore, all people, and sing a song of freedom and of joy.” And all the people came shouting, and there was a great multitude.

And when the princes and warriors beheld this, they said, “Lo ! the brute has found his strength, farewell to the rule of the few over the many ; let us see what despair and the sword can do.” And they advanced against the people, and there came

one who exclaimed, “Of this vast city was I king, and over that vast multitude did I reign at noon-day. But see what a day may bring forth; I love my people, but the freedom of their own wills will make them dangerous one unto another; and, since they have forgotten their duty as subjects, I shall teach them with my sword obedience to right divine. Follow me.” “Alas!” said an ancient warrior, “we were unwise to quarrel with the priests, they are a good and a holy people, and sustain the dignity of the crown so long as they share its plunder. The rancour of the church keeps civil fury alive, and it cannot be either a just war, or a wise one, which wants a priest.” “We will do the best we can without the church’s aid,” answered the princes; “though we confess we open^{the} the war with no good augury when we have not a priest to animate us, and fill us with a proper thirst for blood.” They entered the gate, they fought their way from street to street, marking every step with blood, and when they reached the palace the fire was rushing red and overwhelming from porch and window. And the fire seized on the houses on their right and on their left, and rushed against them as they went along, and still they ran, and still the red and rolling fire followed them, and the gates seemed too narrow to allow them to escape to the fields. And when

they reached the green-wood side they looked behind them, and neither fire nor city could be seen, and they marvelled greatly, and felt toiled and pained as if they had been seared with burning iron.

Then said they one unto another, “ We have seen a vision to night of the deep misery which is about to fall upon mankind. The enemy will besiege our cities, cast down our towers, destroy our people, and consume our palaces with fire, and we shall hardly escape from the destruction.” They laid their bridles on their horses necks, and rode slowly and silently away. And as they rode, they said one unto another, “ Who is he who rides before us on yon steed with a mane like a meteor, with eyes of fire, and hoofs which dint not the sod, yet send forth a sound like thunder?” “ The steed is fearful, and terrible is the rider. He is clothed with terrors, and there is a shining weapon in his hand, which dazzles the eye, and afflicts the heart with fears.” And they followed the rider pale and aghast, for they could not but follow; and they lamented as they went, for they believed their hour of destruction was come.

And they rode on, and they came to a fair field, where they saw an army with couched lances on one side, and an army with couched lances on the other, while a trumpet blew, and the squadrons rushed together like a wave

which the passing keel divides. When the princes and warriors saw this, they sought to fly but they could not, they were shocked out of their saddles and borne unto the earth, and trampled down by the feet of the victors among the blood of the vanquished. And while the kings lay bruised on the ground, there stood a soldier upon one of them, and, holding up a gory head by the locks, he exclaimed, "The tyrant is slain, and our country is free." And he threw the head high into the air, and waved his sword, bloody from point to hilt, crying "Come all ye who love freedom, peace, home-bred happiness, and domestic joy. Come all ye who rejoice in music, and in mirth, and song, and delight to see the sharp sickles glittering beneath the yellow ears of corn, and rejoice in the flocks as they whiten the side of the green hill. Come and be glad, for the tyrant is dead, and man shall oppress us no more." And he ceased, and his fellow soldiers shouted, and they all retired each man to his own home.

And the princes of the earth rose from among the dead and the dying, and their clothes were spotted with blood, and they said one unto another, "This was a woeful chance, but other evils await us, for lo, the fierce rider is again before us ; see how his steed flies over the battle field." And

they mounted horses which were running saddled and bridled in hundreds, and followed their spectral guide, for a spell was upon them. And they rode till they came to an imperial city, and there was a dead silence, and not a light gleamed from casement or tower, nor did a sentinel stand on wall or gate, and the gates were wide open, and they saw two wolves coming out. And when they came nigh to the gate they stood, and said, “Lo, the enemy’s hand has been upon this noble city ; see her walls are shattered with shot, her towers are shaken to their foundations, her houses have been consumed with fire, and her sons and daughters corses have choked the streets.” And they rode along, and the streets were littered with balls, and bones, and swords, and spears, and their horses feet clattered amongst dry bones, and made a fearful sound. And when the sound arose there came an old man forth from one of the ruins, who was bent to the ground, whose head was bare and hoary ; he looked on them, and groaned, and said, “Cursed be the kings of the earth, for they are all oppressors ; cursed be their counsellors, for they delight in tyranny ; and cursed be their strong men, for they delight in blood. A father’s curse be on them, and a father’s curse cling to them, and pull their strength and their glory down as they have pulled mine ;” and he turned away, and laid

down among the dead men's bones which choked all the streets. And as they rode on there came a strange bewilderment upon them, their hands dropt their bridles, their feet left the stirrups, and they saw the starry heaven above them and knew it not, and the grass beneath their feet, yet they knew not that it was growing. And a supernatural swiftness was given to their horses, and they went over field, and flood, and skirted the mountain, and when the day dawned they halted in a foam by the side of the ocean, and neither ship was to be seen on the flood, nor town, nor house, nor human thing on the shore. And they looked one unto another, and said, "Have we had a dream, or have we seen a vision, or have we encountered and braved all the horrors with which our fancy is haunted?" And there came a wild loud laugh from the top of a foaming wave, and a voice said, "Ye have tasted in the imagination what ye will soon feel in the body." And they looked, and they saw something like a human form floating on the water, it raised its head like a wild swan, and shook its brown tresses, and made the shores ring with a long and gladsome laugh. And they cursed Brunelfin, and he laughed louder.

Now when the priests had returned to their churches, and the princes to their palaces, they thought on what they had heard and witnessed

when they were lately assembled, and they meditated on the terrible things which had happened unto them. And while they sat at night, conceiving what would be the surest mode of vengeance against those who were seeking, by introducing a love of knowledge and a desire of freedom among mankind, to crush the throne and confound the altar, there came two messengers; one to prince, and one to priest, and the tidings which they brought were alarming and momentous.

It was late, for the candles were burning bedward, and the wine cups were going their last round, and princes and princesses were waving their jewelled hands, and counsellors and warriors were bowing their unbonnetted heads, when a man strode into the palace. The guard saw him not, nor did the armed nobles, who filled all the galleries, behold him as he came, but the pictures shook, the coats of mail clattered, and the statues tottered as he passed ; when he came to the foot of the throne, he stayed for no introductory greeting, but looking on the King, said, “ Up ! arise ; bestir thee, cast the wine cup from thy hand ; quit thy painted madams, mount thy ablest war-horse, give thy ancient pennon to the wind, and summon thy best and thy bravest around thee ; for, by the faith of a soldier, thou wilt need them all.”

And the King replaced the untasted cup on the

table ; made a sign for his guards to draw near ; and, looking on this singular messenger, said, “ Who art thou ? ” “ Who am I ! ” exclaimed he, “ wouldst thou gladly hear ? Who I am can import thee little to know ; seest thou this token ? ” And he threw before the king a hand newly severed from the body, and on the finger was a monarch’s signet ring. The King took the drinking cup with his foot, and made the red wine spout over the jewelled dresses of the ladies, while he cried, “ Spread the banner, draw the sword, blow the war trumpet, and never let the pennon furl round the flag-staff, the sword find its sheath, nor the trumpet cease its battle-call, till we have avenged this foul murder done upon the Lord’s anointed. Behold that bloody token, the hand of a blessed monarch, one who reigned over a fierce people, longing for what they had no right to enjoy, and desiring what was forbidden ; even while that fatherly hand was held over them in mildness, and in just judgment, they rebelled, and struck it from the body.” And he took the bloody hand, and placed it in a golden casket, and standing beside the messenger, said, “ Go, warn the captains of my people, and tell them that a war, fiercer and bloodier than all former wars, will to-morrow be waged, a war of princes against slaves ; of the chief spirits of the earth against the lowliest and the basest.”

And the messenger stood by his side, and seemed to infuse his own fierce and malevolent nature into the monarch ; for his face grew dark as death, his eyes emitted a fiercer light, his voice lost its music, and became hollow, hoarse, and piercing. And his captains wondered at the change, and all the dames of the palace trembled, and looked with fear on the strange messenger. And the trumpet was blown at midnight ; the king took down his sword from the wall, and a wild cry of sorrow rang from palace to street as he and his captains, and his soldiers hurried out at the opening gate.

And at the same hour the Pontiff, with all his cardinals and chief priests, was seated on his throne, on the seven hills ; a mitre was on his head more precious than a monarch's crown, and he held out his foot, which the proudest princes of the earth had been fain to kiss ; he wanted only immortality to be as a god. Around him sat thousands of obedient priests, ready to waft his will to the remotest nook of Christendom, which all men heard with fear, and obeyed with trembling, and before him knelt too suppliant kings, bowing their uncrowned heads in the dust, and praying to have their kingdoms restored, and their peace made with the infallible vicar of Christ.

Into this proud assembly a messenger rushed ;

nor bowed he reverently, nor greeted he the presence ; but, thrusting one of the prostrate kings over with his foot, he thus spoke, “ Infallible Priest, why sit ye idly among your servants, listening to that servile mortal who begs back his bauble, when your throne of gold is tottering, and a blow has been struck which will shake the mitres from the heads of your highest.” The Pontiff rose in his seat, and said, “ My son, in what quarter has this cloud arisen ? ” And the messenger answered, “ In a fair island in the west ; there the people have arisen, and trodden into dust the holy images ; they have showered the consecrated water into the air ; they have blasphemed the saints ; and they have gathered the holy relics together, and consumed them with fire. It was by the light of the true cross that I made my escape, and came over the sea to tell you.”

Then the Pontiff clasped his hands, and exclaimed, “ Ah ! my fair, and fat, and profitable isle, art thou fallen away from the faith, and become leprous with heresy ? Ah ! many a rich gift have I had from thy thick-witted people ; and many a pleasant abode did we build for ourselves in thy fairest vallies. Well didst thou pay, and little didst thou profit, for we fleeced thy peers and merchants, and princes, nor did we deal amongst thy devout sons the goodly inheritances of the

earth, the places which give power over chief captains and kings. But thou hast fallen from the true faith, and it is my duty, as a parent, to admonish and reclaim thee. I shall teach thee, proud isle, that thou hast given grievous offence, and the half of thy gold and silver shall not purchase thy return to our paternal bosom. Thou shalt feel in thy sinking fleets, in thy vanquished armies, in thy burning cities, and falling towers, that thou hast insulted one who can save or destroy; who holds the crowns of kingdoms in his left hand, and the keys of heaven in his right. Let us pray." And they all knelt down, save the dark messenger who stood, and heard the muttered prayers with a face of scorn; and when they arose from their knees he said, "The air of a heretical isle polluted me, and I dared not to kneel among men so holy." And they all blessed him, and rejoiced, that where a whole people had proved false, one had remained faithful.

CHAPTER XI.

Fitz-Eustace' heart felt closely pent,
As if to give his rapture vent,
The spur he to his charger lent,
And raised his bridle hand :
And making demi-volte in air,
Cried, “ Where's the coward that would not dare
To fight for such a land ! ”

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

THE fresh air of the morning fanned Sir James's brow, the sun rose bright above the waters, the sails of the passing ships glanced gaily in the light, and all the towns, and towers, and cities, on the coast of Britain's isle, showed their glittering roofs and threw their shadows far on land, or wide on the water. But it was not to the shore alone that Sir James turned his eye with pleasure, for already he looked on the inland pasture mountains, and heard the call of the flock, and the song of the bird, and the ballad of the early maiden, as she sought the hill side with her pails. He looked, and listened, and was glad.

And he stood with Sir Michael on one of the

Cheviot hills, and looked on Scotland, and looked on England, and said, “ Bless ye, bless ye both! United by nature, why should ye be sundered in heart—why should ye be divided in your affections? Proud and valorous, and the birth-place of the brave, the wise, and the worthy, with a deep sea surrounding you, that you may become the mistress of the ocean, and with a shallow stream dividing your rival realms, that you may unite and grow into one; love each other, and cast the weapons down, with which ye have warred so bravely and unwisely.” And he stretched his hand south, and he stretched his hand north, and prayed silently for peace and unity between them.

And Sir Michael said, “ Thy wish will be fulfilled, and the world shall win its freedom from their union; but neither to thy eyes, nor mine, can that blessed sight be revealed in reality, though it will not be long till it is accomplished. All that the world contains has been shown to thee; thou hast seen the bright heaven above, and the darksome hell beneath; with good spirits hast thou talked, and with evil ones hast thou conversed; thou hast witnessed the rule which Satan holds among men; and man, and his ways, hast thou studied, in the cottage, the court, the city, and the camp. What hast thou profited?”

Ere Sir James could reply, Sir Michael pointed with his hand to a cloud, which came slowly curling along the sea towards the shore. When it first appeared it was small, and of a purple hue, but it expanded as it approached, its colour became dark, and before it reached the land it filled all the space between the sea and sky, blotted out the light of the morning, and something like an eclipse came upon the world. “Enemy of mankind, I know thee well,” said Sir Michael, looking anxiously upon the cloud, and laying his hand on the shoulder of Sir James; “what may that portend? A fierce and terrible war to Britain, for the sake of the purer faith she has accepted, and in hatred of the love of liberty which her princes have owned in common with her people. Yon cloud is the symbol which the Spirit of Evil holds out for his inferior spirits to observe and read, of attempts which will be made against Britain’s liberty and faith; but be silent a little.” And he looked long and earnestly upon the dark visitant, his face brightened, and he said, “I knew it of old, and there needed no evil hand to point out the glory, while it pointed out the danger. Even as yon cloud hangs on the sea, and cannot touch the land, though anxiously the spirit which sends it rolls it on, so will the terror and the danger approach our coast, yet our sod will never be

impressed with a hostile step, nor shall we see an enemy in our country before he is vanquished. But the wall of brass, which I was fated of old to build as a rampart around our isle, is the wall which must repel this invasion; and it is time to begin it, for already have the princes of the earth and the priests begun to plot against us, saying, ‘Let us go and conquer yon green island, and slay its men with the sword, and send its women to far countries, for it has rebelled against the divine power of kings, and the dispensing power of priests.’” And Sir Michael looked anxiously on sea and land, and turning to Sir James, said, “The men of this isle must think with one mind, and fight with united heart and hand, else Britain’s sun of glory will set in blood, and men will speak a foreign language in her high places.”

Sir James made answer, “I thought once as the narrow-minded think, that England was Scotland’s foe, and the more her strength was broken the happier it would be for my native land. But now I feel differently. United in love of liberty, in purity of worship, and desirous alike of resisting foreign oppression, they must unite in power and in action under one head and one heart, else both will become the prey of the spoiler. Soon may that pure stream, through whose disturbed waters so many martial ranks have rushed, cease to be

the boundary of two hostile nations. The day will come, when the maidens will bleach their linen on the banks, and the shepherds will bring down their flocks to drink at the stream ; nor shall fear be upon them, but much joy of heart will be theirs. Then shall those castles be dismantled, and become haunts of the owl and pens for cattle, and Englishmen and Scotsmen will meet, and wonder at the fury of their ancestors."

And they descended towards the coast, and sitting on a rock which overhung the sea, they watched in silence the passing, the going, and returning sails. And there came a little bark, breasting the waters like a wild swan, and snoring along, with its canvas filled by a fair wind, while only one man guided it on its course. And Sir Michael held out his hand, and the bark touched the shore with its prow, and beckoning to Sir James he went on board. "How long wilt thou be in sailing round this fair isle, mariner?" said the knight. And the mariner answered, "The weather is stormy, the coast dangerous, the way long, and my little bark is a creature which I love as I love myself, and I wish not to knock its ribs against a rock, or sink its keel in a quick-sand." "Go to, Elf," said Sir Michael, with a smile, "thinnest thou to deceive me? Thy boat is made of charmed materials, and can skim the

waves fleeter than the swallow, pluck up thy anchor, if thou hast such a needless incumbrance; give all thy sails to the wind, thou knowest our voyage will be a speedy and a prosperous one."

Brunelfin turned the vessel's head to the sea, and away the bark went, dancing over the waters as bright and as rapid as a beam of the morning sun. "Master," he said, "how long am I to remain in bondage doing thy behests on the snowy mountains of the north, and in the burning sands of the desert. When shall I dive no more to the bottom of the merciless sea to count the men who lie drowned there, when shall I ascend no more to watch the falling star, and seize it for thee before it descends to the earth." "Idle Elf," answered the other, "art thou wearied of the service of him who has been so indulgent to thee. Thou wilt become the slave of some evil spirit when I discard thee, and thy days shall be wearysome, and thy nights sad. Some servant of the pit will transform thee as thou wert lately transformed, and ride round the globe on thee till the day of doom." Loud laughed Brunelfin, and answered, "Aye! merrily did I gallop over hill and holm, over mountain and flood, all under the light of the moon. 'Twas pleasant, pleasant for a time, to see the hills left so rapidly behind, and the running streams trembling as we bounded over them, and to hear the deep

sea sighing as we paced over its foaming billows. But the joy grew into weariness, and the weariness into pain, before my inexorable tormentor drew bridle. But I vowed a deep vow, and devoutly have I kept it." "Peace, intolerable Imp," said Sir Michael; "I know how thou wert avenged, and how thou didst torment the servants of the Evil Spirit round the green earth."

"Aye! but Michael, thou knowest not," said the Elf, "with what fear of heart and mildness of nature I led the priests from hill to rock, and from rock to sea, through sinking quick-sands and raging billows, who sought to burn thee out of love for religion. Ah! they never endured such a penance, and, even now, they are counting how many years of sin it has atoned for. Nor knowest thou in what fearsome shapes I was visible to the gentle princes of the earth, and how kindly I guided them through scenes of dread and terror, such as they never witnessed before? O! hadst thou seen the misery of those anointed ones! But thou art a severe master, and my bondage will not be made lighter for all my manifold services."

"Merry and artful Elf, I thank thee," replied Sir Michael; "and the time is nigh when thou wilt be as free as yon feather which the cormorant has pruned from its wing. But I have use for thee even now, all the evil feelings of man's nature,

sharpened and soured by civil dissensions, and by religious rancour, and aided by all the might of the enemy of man's salvation and happiness, are about to be let loose upon this little isle, and it will require all the might and the wisdom of its people to withstand them. But they shall be withstood, and when the sunshine of peace gladdens us again, thou shalt be made as free as the wind on the mountains, or the roe on undiscovered vales."

Half-mast high sprang Brunelfin when he heard this, and loudly he laughed till the cormorants started from the cliffs. "Hilloa!" he shouted, "happy, happy Elfin; I shall run round the mountains among the bonnie moonlight, I shall ride on the back of the curly billows in every sunny firth, and I shall take my charmed pipe and walk among the abodes of man, and give them music such as shall scare sorrow away, and they will cry, in their dreams, 'merry, merry Elfin.' And all the dames will bless me, for I shall bleach their webs as they lie on the gowans by some fairy-burn bank to whiten in the evening dew, and I shall bear the cannie woman through the flooded river when our lady wishes to be lighter, and tend the little lambkins from the fox's tooth, and the tender song-birds shall be my care, and I shall watch them from the hawk when the goslin-down is upon them. Nor shall I forget to watch the

sweet children as they chase the butterfly up the deep river-bank, or pull nuts from the trees which hang over the pools, or bathe their little limbs amid the clear streams, for I love little children, they are so light of heart, and laugh so sweetly."

As Brunelfin spoke, the joyousness of his nature made him forget his task, his hand forsook the helm, and the bark wheeled round in the waters as light as a feather in an eddy. Sir Michael laid his hand on the helm, and as he touched it, the bark sprang forward with such a bound that Sir James nearly fell on the deck, and the Elf uttered a scream of dismay. The prow seemed to shear the waves asunder as rapidly as a shooting star divides the air, and when they came to a fair haven, on which a stately city threw the shadows of its towers and churches, the bark stayed as if an invisible hand had seized its keel.

And Sir Michael leaped on shore, and he saw many armed ships; their masts were struck and stowed away, their guns were withdrawn from their ports, and they lay rocking on the billows, black and mutilated hulks, while the seamen slept idly on the deck, or sent from the tavern ashore many a merry laugh, many a pleasant song, and many a wild legend. And he saw the captains, men tanned with the suns of distant climates, and scarred with the wounds which they had freely taken in defence of

their country. And they sat gladsome with their wives and with their children, nor dreaming that war was nigh. And Sir Michael entered, and said, “Men of Britain, spread your sails, replace your cannon, and fill your decks with the bold hearts and heavy hands of your country, for your enemy is coming upon you, and the battle will be desperate and bloody.”

And a Captain answered, “Fear us not, noble Knight, nor doubt that we shall war while there is blood in our veins for our country and our homes. That element which you see rolling before you we can walk upon in our ships as gaily and as boldly as you can make your career on a fair field. To no enemy do we ever lower our flag; we fight, we conquer, or we perish. Our hearts are disciplined, and we go as willingly to do battle on the deep as we go to a wedding-feast.” And his children flocked round Sir Michael, and wondered who the stranger might be, whose words had made their mother’s cheek grow pale.

And Sir Michael answered, “I know, noble Howard, that the spirit of your country is as you have described it. But you have to fight with the first warriors of Christendom, animated against you by difference of religion, by national pique, and by desire of conquering a people so renowned. Are these slight and little vessels of yours equal to contest

the dominion of the sea with ships which tower above you as a castle overlooks a cottage, which are filled with men trained to arms in the fierce wars that have so long desolated Europe; men to whom a breastplate of steel is like a mantle of silk, and who know the use of every instrument which has been invented for destruction? Alas, with all your courage, I dread the result."

Howard eyed Sir Michael for a moment, and said, "Thou art thyself a skilful warrior; wilt thou take command under me? the first of my nation think it no dishonour to obey the commands of a Howard. Thou wilt not? well, free to come and free to go. I thank thee for thy tidings, but we are never unprepared; be thy own eyes witness how ready we are when danger calls to meet the foe on our favourite element." He walked to the sea-side, and pulling out a little ivory horn, winded it so shrilly that all the shores rang. Hundreds of seamen sprang upon the decks, and boats started from shore to ship with crowds of mariners; the masts arose in their places, they were clothed with milk-white canvass from the streamer to the deck, the brazen guns filled their carriages, men swarmed all over the ship with pistols and swords glittering in their belts, and the ships moved away into the ocean like things awaked into sudden life.

“Behold,” said Howard, “the hulks which lay late so wrecklike and so motionless, have become gallant ships ready to do battle, and they are guided by men who will fight to the last plank. What do we regard the floating castles of the proud Castilian? we shall sail round and round their unwieldly hulks, and strike them in their vulnerable parts, and render all the valour and skill of their commanders useless. We shall teach them that we are the rulers of the deep, the true founders of our country’s dominion; for we can in our fleets stoop on every coast like eagles, and make a prey of all.” And he looked proudly upon his ships; each moved as easily and beautifully on the billows as a wild swan when it lays its white neck back between its uplifted wings, and spreads its bosom to the waters.

“Brave man,” said Sir Michael, “freedom and pure worship, and the long-standing honour of the nation are safe in such hands as yours. Go, call up all your English mariners, and launch all your ships, nor dread the weight and warlike appearance of your enemies, for I tell you surely, that they shall be utterly confounded, their strength shall be their destruction, and they shall feel, when it is too late, that success is not to the confident, but to the watchful and the brave, and that their gay and

gilded castles are no match for the homely but active ships of our gallant islanders."

Then the bark of Sir Michael flew along the coast, he looked into every harbour, and into every haven and river mouth. And there he saw the ships urged from the stocks by busy hands, leaping for the first time into the element in which they were to conquer. He saw the tall masts quivering beneath their load of canvass, the new-forged anchors and the new-cast guns fixed in their places, and the boarding-pikes, and cutlasses, and carbines strewn upon the decks, and the mariners embarking with many a joyous cheer. He saw the woods on which, during the summer months, the small birds had sung, and beneath the boughs of which the wild deer had run in troops, obeying the fashioner's axe and the architect's wish, and ploughing the sea like creatures to which the genius of man had communicated life and motion. Into these little ships he saw the grave and warlike spirit of the island descend, and he leaned on the shoulder of Sir James, and said, " See these gallant men ; see how this little isle pours out its whole soul in its defence ; there the unconquerable hearts of the nation are embarked, and victory is theirs." And they saw crowds of people armed on the hills, lances and cannon glittering in the vallies, and the walled towns filling their towers with armed

men; nor did the song cease, nor the joy of the people abate, but with a grave and martial glee they prepared themselves for the coming contest.

As the bark darted along the coast, Sir Michael exclaimed, when he saw the lofty mountains and deep bays of the north, “ Hail ! martial Scotland, hast thou prepared thyself to do battle for thy freedom and thy faith ? ” As he spoke, the bays sent forth their armed ships, the towns sent forth their people, and land and sea were glittering with weapons, and touched with martial life. “ I knew, I knew,” exclaimed Sir James, “ that my native Scotland, though barren are her mountains and narrow are her plains, would be the first to rise in defence of faith and freedom. Alas ! her wealth is little, and she comes not glittering to the field in gold and in silver, with gems in her bonnet that would buy an earl’s land. But her sword is sharp, and smites full sorely, and her heart can be as little daunted as subdued. See, see, the spears which shone at Sark, and Otterburne, and Flodden-edge, are glancing in the sun again ; she unites her strength to her sister England, and they are ready on sea and prepared on shore.”

Then Sir Michael touched again the helm of the bark, and it started right away into the wide sea, and their native isle was quickly left far behind them. And he looked upon the receding

shore, and the lessening hills, and said as he looked, “ Around thee, Britain, is drawn that charmed wall over which nought can climb, and through which nothing can break. To thee is given a little speck of earth; but to thee also is given an unlimitable ocean. On that moving element, the sight of which fills other nations with dread, shalt thou establish a dominion more powerful than the mightiest monarchies of the earth. If the Continent is the wolf, thou art the eagle; the wolf may roam the woods, she may enter inhabited places for her prey, and may fill her lair with the bones of men, but her limit is assigned, the deep sea hems her in, and nature presents eternal barriers to her rapacity. But the eagle—to him is given all that is beneath the sun; the shadow of his wing fills the forest with fear, he soars from continent to isle, striking his prey where he pleases, and choosing what is pleasant out of every land. The wild wolf eyes him, but to his eyrie she cannot come, while he sails in supreme dominion over sea and shore.”

The little bark went dancing over the summits of the waves; the sun set; the moon, with many stars, arose; and a new land came on their sight with all its towers and towns. “ We shall see what the nations are doing,” said Sir Michael; “ this is singing and praying Italy; her men are

monks, and her daughters are nuns, and all that is left of the ancient spirit of the people, is a deep deceit which men would be wise to fear. A thousand lights flashed from the windows of her temples and palaces, and all the sea, for a mile from the shore, glittered as if the sun had arisen ; and Sir Michael dropt anchor in the flood and leapt on land. Down the street of a noble city came a procession of the hierarchy and nobles, a wooden image, covered with rags and ribbons, was borne before them, and all the people knelt as it approached.

And a priest said, “ Come all ye who have clean hands and pure hearts ; who have purified the grossness of your bodies by penance, and conciliated the saints by benefactions to the church ; come all ye who never allowed the deadly sin of heresy to enter your thoughts, who believe in the holy image borne before you, that the holy father is infallible, and that heretics are the fuel which maintains hell-fire ; come all, and fall down before this blessed image, and pray that her looks may be changed into affection, and that she may bend her stern brows on your enemies, and look with eyes of mercy on her children.” And all the people fell down in the street where they stood, and remained prostrate for the space of many minutes. And a priest arose, and shouted loudly, “ Arise, your prayers are heard. Look

upon the pleasant countenance of the blessed image; she smiles, and ye shall prevail against your enemies.” And all the people arose from their knees, and there was great joy through all the city.

Now there came a messenger from Spain, and he went up to the priests, and said, “ Our fleet is ready, and our troops are impatient to embark that they may conquer the Isle of Heretics, and divide it among them as an inheritance. And my master sends me to you to request the aid of the church in a war undertaken for her salvation and glory.”

And the priests said, “ Let us replace this glorious image in our church, and scatter consecrated incense in the air, and kneel before our holy shrines, and fast amid the fatness and fulness of the earth, three days and three nights. On the fourth we shall hear what you have to say; on the fifth we shall consider of it; and the sixth we shall send you on your way rejoicing, with an answer worthy of thy master our servant.” And the priest turned to the holy image, and said, “ Forgive this delay, O divine protectress! Move on, ye dutiful children.” And four monks proceeded with the image; and as they entered the door of the church, the messenger, a man with a short cloak, a long sword, a hat with a raven feather, and

a face as dark as iron, laid his hand on the priest's sleeve, and said, “ You have said well as a churchman, and as one accustomed to overcome by wily prayers and holy management ; but we have to do with enemies who consider an injury done to the church as a meritorious thing ; they are already preparing to receive and resist us ; and, holy father, those island heretics have heavy hands and stubborn hearts. Come, replace the holy image in her niche ; assemble your priests, and let me have an answer in an hour ; the cause brooks no delay ; for cold steel and deadly blows must do the needful, not prayers and fastings ; though they were once good things, and effectual.” And the image was replaced in the niche, and the priests assembled before the great altar, and one of them said, “ What would our servant, your master, more than we have already done for him ? speak, and we shall know.”

And the Spaniard answered, “ My master, the true Catholic monarch, the only pure and most holy, is not aware that the good and considerate church has aided him in aught ; speak, that I may know how far you have anticipated his wants.” Then the chief priest replied, “ Listen, that ye may know what we have done to aid and succour him. It is not now the season of self-denial and

abstinence, yet we have fasted twelve days, and prayed twelve nights; fasted, that the mortification of our bodies may be accepted for that of our children; and prayed, that the saints who preside over the fate of nations may do battle in your behalf, and wither the strength of the enemy. One, the holiest and heaviest of our number, has begun a pilgrimage unto Jerusalem to pray for you on Mount Carmel and the hills of Heshbon; and has even ventured himself into the Isle of Heretics to pray at the shrine of Saint Thomas à Becket, that his blood may be avenged on that pestilent race. And finally have we not given, from our own bosom, into the bosom of your prince, a splinter of the true cross, that he may be shielded in the hour of danger and may overcome wherever he draws his sword."

"Father," replied the Spaniard, "these are things good and holy, and had we waged war with men who honoured them and feared them, they might have befriended us much. But the sword or the ball of a cursed heretic, will think it a meritorious matter to slay those who come armed from the armoury of the church; and much as I reverence the saints, and respect reliques, I should think in a battle with these Islanders, my bosom as safe in a proof corslet, as if it were guarded with the splinter of the true cross, and had the prayers of the

church to shield it." "Holy Saint Peter and Saint Paul both, and our Lady of Loretto, too," exclaimed the priest, "what manner of man art thou? Has the poison of disbelief been infused into thy heart? Thou hast said enough to draw down upon thee the anger of the saints, and stir up the indignation of the church. And respect for thee only, as the messenger of our servant thy master, preserves thee from having thy tongue plucked out, and thy body broken upon the wheel." And all who heard him trembled, save the messenger.

"Holy and merciful priest," said the Spaniard, "thou wilt not, surely, send such a message to my master thy servant. He is a holy monarch; but, by Saint James, he is a fierce man, and it may come into his head when it is hot, that the surest way to obtain the effectual aid of the church, is by drawing his sword and inquiring about the latitude of Rome. Hearken, Sir Priest," and throwing aside his mantle, he displayed a ducal star, a brace of pistols with a long sharp poinard; "my master must have gold—gold." And he laid his hand on the hilt of his sword, as if to intimate the way he was determined to obtain it.

"Fair son," said the Priest, "be mild, and be moderate; in the matter of the fine gold, the church would gladly stead thy master, for it is a metal beneath our regard. It grieves me deeply

that this cannot now be done, for I have already consecrated all the gold we possess, and the gems too, to make a golden image of our blessed Lady of Loretto, who is the patroness of thy master's enterprise. Thou seest, therefore, my dutiful son, that our riches are dedicated to this expedition more effectually than if they had purchased the munitions of war." The messenger knelt with much humility, held up his hands, and said, "Ever blessed be the church, for she is kind and merciful; let me look, I pray thee, on this sacred and dedicated treasure, it will do my eyes much good, and I shall say, when I return to Spain, that I beheld the element out of which the church creates her champions."

And the Priest led the way into a private crypt, where a silver lamp was ever burning, and there lay much treasure in diamonds and in gold, the benefactions of tender consciences, the peace offerings of murder, and lust, and rapine, the plunder of all the nations of the earth who bowed to the power of Rome. And the Priest held up the lamp over the heaps of treasure, and said, "Fair son, thou seest the offerings which men have made in honour of our humility and self-denial; I often revisit this place, to remind me of the instability of fortune, that I may despise the filthy lucre, and lift my mind to the saints. To-

morrow this dross shall sink in the crucible, and a pure and lady-like figure will come forth." The Spaniard took from his pocket a coin of gold, impressed with the head of the king his master, and throwing it among the treasures, said, "Gold and gems, I enlist ye in the cause of the church, and my royal master. Holy Father, the shaft of a pomegranate, or cedar, will make a worthy and acceptable image; and in the name of the leader of the fleets and armies of the holy league, I command that this treasure be sent to pay our soldiers and mariners; else by the blessed St. James of Compostella, we shall make Italy resound with the thunder of the Spanish cannon." And he strode out of the church, and went down to the harbour, and high in chafe was he. And there lay the bark of Sir Michael, a fair and beautiful Spanish ship it seemed, and the messenger leaped on board, and ordered the anchor to be weighed. The sails were spread to the breeze, and when they were on the wide sea, the charm which was thrown upon the Spaniard was dispelled, and he saw strange faces around him; an angry man was he, and he laid his hand on his sword.

"Be pacified," said Sir Michael; "the way in which you bearded yon fierce priest has won my affection, and I shall put you on Spanish ground before your own ship can have picked up her

anchor. Whither would you go?" The Spaniard looked strangely on Sir Michael, and said, " Cadiz; but, mother of Saint Iago, whom do I behold? The holy man who, in Salamanca's cavern showed me the chequered fortunes of my career. I reverence thee, nay, I should kneel to thee, for thou art of the number of the immortals." And the Spaniard clasped the knees of Sir Michael, who said, " See; look on that fleet, seems it not a royal one? each ship rises lofty from the sea, and casts a shadow on the water like a palace; and the mariners and warriors who crowd the decks and cabins are men renowned through Europe. But see," and he drew forth a leaden saint; one which a priest had during the procession thrust into his hand; and he dropt it into the water, and said, " Even so shall thy ships sink, and thy chief captains descend into the deep, and none shall save them. The storms of heaven and the hand of man shall combine against them, and the shores of Britain shall be strewn with the wreck of your fleet, and the bodies of your bravest shall lie like shells on her sea sand. Go, tell your king that I said so."

" Being, more than man," said the Spaniard, " since thou hast said it, it will surely happen. But not for storms of heaven nor hands of man will this royal armament be stayed. Already our

noblest and our bravest are on board; the wind is fair, the saints are propitious, and your proud island shall tremble as in an ague fit.” “Castilian,” replied the other, “be counselled; the wind sleeps now, but it will soon awaken; the saints are impostors, and deceive you, as they have deceived the nations; the sea will smile, and the sky laugh, and the church will recount its miracles, and prophecy your success; but disaster, destruction, and death are behind and before you, and those, and they will be few, who return from this unholy crusade, shall escape disgraced as Spaniards were never before.”

“I will hear no more, were the words from the lips of a god,” said the Spaniard, and he sprang into the sea, and swam for the bay, which lay brightened with innumerable lights before him. “Shall I drown him, or save him,” said Brunel-fin; and, skimming along the wave, he seated himself on a billow beside the Spaniard, whose wide cloak, and heavy weapons encumbered his strength and activity. “How much wilt thou give to see the homes of the mermaidens,” said the Elf; “they lie below the bay of Cadiz three hundred fathoms odd.” “Cursed Imp,” cried the Spaniard, grasping at Elfin’s throat. “So, brother swimmer,” said the Elf, “I must tame thee into companionship;” and he dived, taking the other with

him. They were under the waves a minute or more, when their heads emerged from the water, Brunel-fin, with a loud startling laugh, and the other sputtering out the brine, and invoking the saints.

“Thou invoke the saints!” said the Elf, giving him another dip over the head; “didst thou not hinder Mother Church from making a notable saint fit to have redeemed seven such dogs as thyself from the door of hell.” Then, molesting him no further, he allowed him to swim slowly along; but when he neared the ships, the Elf exclaimed, “Room there for a maritime ambassador from his Holiness; room there, a miracle has been wrought; he has swum hither from Italy, and brings ten thousand times ten thousand benedictions; a million of blank dispensations for all manner of sins, and a chip of the true cross sliced from a cripple’s crutch. Room there!” And when the mariners heard the call they lowered a boat, and with fear and wonder took their chief captain from the waves.

CHAPTER XII.

Her timbers yet are sound,
And she may float again,
Full-charged with England's thunder,
And plough the distant main.
But Kempenfelt is gone,
His victories are o'er,
And he, and his eight hundred men,
Shall plough the waves no more.

COWPER.

THE chief leaders of this great enterprize were met together on the evening before the fleet was ordered to set sail for the British coast ; they were summoned late, and the monarch, whose hatred to freedom and to heresy projected the invasion, rose, and addressed them : “ Nobles, and chief captains,” he said, “ I speak to you for the last time before you depart on this meritorious crusade. An army so brave, so numerous, and so well disciplined, conducted by generals of such capacity and consummate skill, never embarked on the ocean before ; and I am proud that my country can send, to the cause of divine right, and the holy and merciful church, a band of brothers so brave

and so faithful. On the sea the light and ill-provided pinnaces of the islanders will not be able to withstand you, and when you gain the shore, one battle, and the country is won. It is therefore a crusade—in which your self-denial, rather than your courage, will be tried; and anticipating this, the holy Father of Rome has sent you a munificent gift of plenary indulgences. Go, therefore—the glory of my crown, and of the Christian church, is in your hands.”

A shout now arose in the bay, and the messenger, dripping with seawater, and with looks haggard and wild, entered the presence. “The brave Sancrose!” cried three voices at once.—“Thou hast not swum the sea, man,” said the king, “out of love for despatch of business?” “Even so,” answered Sancrose, “and swam, too, in company with one of the fiends of Satan. I have not been more than an hour on my passage.” “Thou art surely beside thyself,” said the King; “where hast thou left this marine comrade?” “Even on the sea, my liege,” said Sancrose, “looking like a raven into a dovecote; he abides us at the entrance of the harbour, and foul weather, and worse, will follow.” “Nay, nay—I never heard thee express fear before,” answered Philip; “and I will not believe that thou dreadest the fellest fiend of hell on the ocean. Thou art not scrupu-

pulous in religious matters; thy conscience is extensive both in latitude and longitude, and what can have alarmed thee thus?"

He crossed himself, muttered a brief prayer, and said, "Saint James of Compostella, but I have discovered the cause now. When his Holiness told me what penances he had undergone, what prayers he had put up, what saints he had moved in behalf of thy expedition, and also that he had sent the leader of the army a fragment of the only true cross, to shield his bosom against heretical lances; alas! I doubted their efficacy, and preferred the gold of the church to the prayers of the priests, and thought my bosom safer in my corslet, than protected by any relic, however holy,—see how I am punished." "Holy mother!" exclaimed the King, "will the churlish priest send me only prayers, penances, indulgences, and relics, when I want money to move with in a cause undertaken for his advantage, and the aggrandizement of the priesthood. Go, cut the halsers loose, give your sails to the wind, and when we have subdued those saucy islanders, why we shall even try whether prayers or relics will protect the gates of the Pontiff's city from the assault of his children."

The wind was gentle and fair, the night calm and serene, as this great Armada moved from the bay, and steered its course towards the shores of

Britain. Prayers for its success arose from ten thousand monks ; saints, to the extent of the calendar, were invoked, to render it fortunate ; and millions of knees wore the churlish stones of church and shrine, for the final extinction of heresy. The church and the king who conceived the enterprize, suspicious perhaps of the efficacy of relics, and the success of prayers, had to those spiritual principals added, as auxiliaries, numbers, bravery, discipline, experience, and skill. The veterans of the wars of Germany, France, and Italy, looked with confidence on their leaders, believed in their own valour and good fortune, and cheered themselves on their passage through the sea, with the hope of finding an easy victory and much spoil, among a people whom their church conceived it to be a meritorious thing to smite and slay. All day they moved slowly along, and all night they crept away, with the aid of a gentle wind, till at last, as the sun was going down, they beheld the isle, which they were commissioned to conquer, rising glittering over the waters. Thousand followed thousand to the decks of their lofty ships, and with their hands held over their eyes, and standing in groups, they looked eagerly and with joy on the varied land.

“ God confound these heretics ! ” exclaimed the captain who led the Armada, “ what a glorious

land they possess. Behold the hills are covered with verdure to the summits ! See how broad and fertile the vales are between ; and look on those lofty woods, which show among their straight shafts troops of deer, and over their tops the gilded domes of palaces and mansions. Ah ! this is a land for the church to give to the good soldiers who are on their way to conquer it."

" See, too, what splendid cities crowd the coast," said a second captain ; " what magnificent cathedrals tower in the distance, what noble harbours they possess ; but look ! what black specks are these which mottle the ocean ? A fleet, by Saint Benito—a fleet of fishing boats ! Has this royal isle no ships to defend it ? Then hail, merry England—thou art about to change masters." A thousand soldiers shouted at his words, and another of the leaders exclaimed, " What fierce fiends these islanders are ! only see how their little fleet comes bearing down upon us, each ship with its handful of men on its deck. What ! will the wasps war with the eagles ? "

As he spoke the island fleet came round a headland of pines, each little ship bearing its banner, and moving through the water as naturally as the wild swan swims, or the foam floats upon the wave. The muzzles of the carabines, and the long and polished yew-bows, and the

burnished steel heads of the boarding spears were seen glancing on the decks of the ships as they followed each other in a long line; and there appeared groups of eager and determined faces desiring the contest. The British ships lay low in the water, those of the enemy rose far above; the former were as black as the sea-eagle, the latter were gilded and carved, and threw a golden gleam upon the sea; the leaders of both were well matched in skill and courage, and the soldiers were rivals in discipline and valour. But to the island sailors the sea was as welcome and as well-known as their mother's bosom; to their enemies it was an object of distrust and fear, and they longed for the firm land and the level plain. The sun, as they approached each other, gathered all his lines of golden light from the sea, and sank slowly down; and the sea-fowls flew in flocks to rock and shore, for they knew the fierce nature of man, and anticipated harm and bloodshed.

The battle began by the British pouring in upon the foremost ship a stream of balls and a shower of arrows so sharp and well directed, that the Spanish veterans, in all their practice, had seldom endured a discharge so deadly. The balls flew in dozens to deck and porthole, and the best steel corslets were a frail protection against the sharp arrows which descended in scores together,

and penetrated whatever they struck. The little vessel passed onward, threw a broadside, and a sheaf or two of arrows upon the second ship, greeted the third with the same sharp welcome, and so passed along till she came to the rear followed by her companions, scattering destruction in their way. They then singled out their opponents, clung close to them, as the wolf-hound clings to the wolf, and strewed their lofty decks with the dead and dying.

The colossal bulk of the Spanish ships, and the unskilful mode in which they were made, together with the want of maritime hardihood and knowledge in the mariners, combined to render them less apt and ready to move, according to the emergencies of battle, than their light and nimble opponents. Their heavy and cumbrous cannon were but of little avail against an enemy who hovered round them as the hawk wheels round the hare, and skipt from wave to wave, and never, for a minute presented a broad and steady mark to the gunners. The discharge of the ordnance was frequent, and the sea was veiled with smoke ; but their chief hope lay in their experienced carabineers, who supported their old renown, and maintained a close and deadly discharge upon the British decks which was fatal to many a gallant man. But this was more than repaid by the island-archers and

musketeers, and, before the battle had lasted an hour, the Spaniards began to feel that they might as well make war on the fowls of the air, or the fish of the sea, as on those alert and elusive antagonists, whom they could neither board, silence, nor sink.

The stream of battle flowed and flashed along the shore of Britain, and as the twilight hour was still and clear, the people crowded hill and headland, and gazed eagerly on the contest, and longed for a share in the glory which their sons and their brothers were achieving. The sight of the martial multitudes who lined the beach struck a damp to the hearts of the invaders. They beheld with wonder the whole heart and soul of the island poured out to the contest; they saw the groves of lances and swords glimmering to the cannon's flash, and they heard the enthusiastic shouts of thousands rending the air whenever the rapid discharges of musketry and cannon thinned the Spanish decks. But they were too brave and too experienced to be induced to give up the contest with foes whom they far outnumbered, and whom they despised as much on land as they felt they were their inferiors on the sea. They kept in good order, and it was chiefly on their headmost and sternmost ships that the storm of battle fell; sea and shore were brightened by the unremitting flash, and had not a darksome and

stormy night set in, the battle would have continued till one fleet, or both, had been destroyed.

A wild and darksome night set in, and so thick and so suddenly sank the darkness, and so deep and so shrill sang the wind, that the boldest hearts were daunted, and wished for the shelter and the safety of the meanest hovel, on continent, or isle. A heavy rain smoked in its descent on deck and wave, and sheets of lightning gleamed in bright and rapid succession, showing the upturned faces of dead men strewing the decks, and men, scarcely more alive than they, looking piteously, with pike or musket in their hands, on the rushing together of the incensed and terrible elements. Dead bodies, too, of men were seen moving as the waters moved, and a line of bloody foam ran along the shore for many miles. Yet still the ships withstood the blast, for the wind was wakened far less fearfully than the fire and the rain; and still the people stood on the headlands, and resolved to abide the issue of a contest which was to influence their fortune as a nation.

It was during a heavy thunder-burst that a group of soldiers, who were standing with their spears in their hands, on a rock which rose an hundred feet above the level of the sea which dashed its foaming waves within a lance's length of their feet, saw, with wonder, a little bark, with only three persons

on board, passing so close to the place where they stood that it seemed as if they could have leaped on board. It was neither, indeed, the shape of this adventurous bark, nor the small complement of its mariners, which amazed the spectators, but the circumstance of its running in the teeth of the wind, and making directly for the middle of the enemy's armada.

"There he goes," cried an English soldier, "that black mercenary old Satan, for who but a devil can run right against the wind; I shall try the merits of my carabine on his infernal person." And presenting his carabine as he spoke, took aim, when one of his comrades cried, "Stay Hubert, stay; bide a bit; an he be a devil thy lead will not harm him, and he may come an do thee an ill turn lad, an thou hits him." Hubert hesitated, dropt the muzzle of his weapon, and said, "I'll never have the opportunity of such another shot at the black incendiary." A bow twanged that instant at his ear, and a cloth-yard arrow flew glittering towards the figure which moved the helm of the little bark. The shaft, ere it reached its object, seemed touched by fire, and dropt into the sea; and the archer exclaimed, "'Tis the great Fiend, else my shaft had sped him, that arrow had flown a north-country mile an ill eyes, an ill hands had been held from it." And

he unstrung his bow, and gazed with his companions upon the adventurous bark.

“ Fear nothing,” said Sir Michael to Sir James, as their bark shot right into the sea, and furrowed the water into foamy ridges on either side as it flew along; “ fear nothing, for the shot shall not harm thee, neither shall the shaft touch thee, nor the carabine, nor the boarding-pike. Thou shalt look on our enemies securely, and behold how the might and the power of man may be foiled by the unprepared and the feeble when the hand of God is with them. The storm rages, the lightning flies, the rain falls, and the clang of battle sounds loud and terrible; but through the storm, the fire, and the rain, and the shouts and shots of war, shall we guide our little pinnace, and I shall show thee on whose side the spirits of blessedness war, and on whose side the angels of darkness contend.” And the bark bounded onward amid the volleying smoke and the whirlwind of battle.

It was a murky night, a star now and then shone dimly through the racking clouds, and the gleaming lightning and the flashing guns showed the uneven and unequal line of battle, extending for several miles. “ Now,” said Sir Michael, “ look, and tell me what thou seest.” And Sir James looked, and he beheld the decks of the enemy’s ships crowded with armed men, and amid them he

observed the dark forms and terrible aspects of the condemned Spirits filling every soldier with a resolution to conquer or die, animating him with a fury not his own, and endeavouring to intercept or turn aside the sharp and incessant shot, and the flight of cloth-yard arrows. But the shot flew to its victim, and the arrow to its mark, nor could all their power and skill preserve men from dropping beneath the deadly shower. “I see,” said Sir James, “troops of condemned shapes warring with all the fury that spirits may on the side of our enemies. What will become of Britain in this evil hour, against the disciplined bravery of man and the malignant fury of hell?” “Look again,” said Sir Michael, “and tell me what thou seest.”

And Sir James looked, and as he looked, the thick storm and smoke was lifted from the battle scene, as a cloud passes from the moon, and the whole lay before him as bright as the hills at noon day. But the roar of the cannon was heard, the shout of the seamen came upon his ear, and the flash of the guns, and the flight of the arrows were visible to his eyes. And his eyes sparkled, and his face seemed to dilate with joy, and he turned to Sir Michael, and said, “Good friends are these who war for Britain, and against them the Spirits of darkness shall not prevail. O, ye bright celestial ones! happy is the hero who has you at his side;

happy is the nation in whose cause you fight. I see you making the flight of balls fall harmless as a shower of snow, the bitter shafts drop short, and the war-spears spare the bosoms at which they are pushed." And as he spoke the cloud came down sevenfold dark, the rain fell so heavy that a man could not face its descent, and the wind arising swept the foam from the waves, and threw it topmast high into the gloomy air.

"Darkness has descended," said Sir Michael, "because mortal eyes may not look upon the celestial warriors and live. Listen—the thunder of the ordnance has ceased, and the shouting of the captains, and the island-blood shall no longer be poured forth in this great contest. Heaven has confided the destruction of this mighty Armada to other hands, and suddenly shall the behest be executed. On this great adventure has come superstition with all her train, witchcraft with all her might, the demons of darkness with all their powers, and ignorance and tyranny with their armed hordes. But superstition shall receive her mortal stroke, witchcraft shall be quenched for ever, the powers of the pit shall fly howling, and ignorance and tyranny shall be pierced through and through, and lord over the earth no longer." While he spoke the wind increased and the rain augmented, and by the gleaming lightning

the enemy's ships were seen flying, their masts quivering like rushes, and their sails rent into threads.

"Come," said Sir Michael, "let us guide them on their way to destruction, for it is decreed that few shall escape." And the bark darted forward, while the tempest seizing its sails, carried it a-head of all the Armada; and when the captain who led the van saw it he was glad, and said, "Blessed be the saints, behold here is one who knows these seas, and comes to lead us from the dangerous shores of Britain in safety." And following the light which streamed along the sea from Sir Michael's bark, the whole Armada passed towards the northern shores of the island, the storm augmenting as they proceeded, and the dangers of the way increasing.

It was past the middle watches of the night when a light, which no human hand kindled, was awakened on a lofty pinnacle which formed the key to a chain of sunken rocks in the northern seas, on which many a gallant ship had been shattered. The fire seemed to gush from a chasm in the rock, and rose half way to heaven, shedding a light for several miles around, which showed the cormorants sleeping on the cliffs, the grim battlements of many a chieftain's tower, and the giant ocean heaping its waves upon the shore as if it desired to devour the land. The sudden gleam of light wakened the peasants in their homes, and startled the

warders on the towers, who stood and marvelled what it might portend.

And the people beheld a bark dancing on the summits of the waves as light as a feather shed from the sea-bird's wing, and it came rushing onwards, and leaving the pillar of light on one side, overleaped the ridge of sunken rocks as easily as one of its accompanying billows, and away it steered, throwing a long trail of light on the waters behind it. Following the same course, they saw with terror a noble navy advancing, a navy such as they had never seen before, the sides of the ships gleaming with brazen cannon, their decks filled with armed men, and their masts quaking in the wind as if they would every moment snap by the board. Forward they went on the dread and inevitable track, while one peasant said unto another, “The world cannot save them; they will be scattered in planks over these terrible waters; they will be spread like chaff which the wind wafts as the farmer cleans his corn.” The Armada struck on the rocks —the pillar of fire sank at once, and all was dark.

The sun had arisen, and the hill tops were touched with his bright and level beam, as Sir Michael and Sir James ascended a rock which commanded a view of the Scottish and English coasts. They looked north and they looked south, and as far as the eye could reach the shore was

heaped with wrecks of ships, and cumbered with dead bodies. “ See,” said Sir Michael, “ the great work of man’s deliverance from slavery, superstition, and tyranny, is accomplished, and there lie the instruments with which they hoped to rivet our chains. ’Twas but yesterday these pieces of wood which are strewn like straw on the ocean, formed one of the noblest navies that ever came from the hand of man; and yesterday these bodies, which lie like seaweeds in the surf, were animated with heroism, and formed a fiery and disciplined army which made our island quake. Behold them now how silently they lie, and how regardless they are of the chafing of the tide, and the flapping of the sea-eagle’s wing. The sword has taken its share, the shot has selected its victims, and the sea has come and swallowed up the residue of mortals. Tyranny is humbled, and the island is free.”

And when Brunelfin heard his master speak thus, he uttered a wild scream of joy, and ran round and round the hill on which they stood, with a rapidity which would have outflown a falcon. Each time that he encompassed it he shouted, till the shores rang, “ Brunelfin is free ! Brunelfin is free ! ” and round he ran, wild with the delight of coming liberty. “ My faithful servant,” said Sir Michael, “ thou art free—thy labour is

done, and the time of thy servitude is past. Go, sport in the moonbeams, sleep among the new lambed lambs, run breathless round the green hillocks, sport with the spotted deer; or sit on the western breeze, and go round the green earth, and like the cuckoo enjoy the summer all the year."

Brunelfin laughed, clapped his hands, and cried, "A pleasanter task shall be mine. I shall help the boy to catch his butterfly, and the poet to weave his thoughts in verse. I shall sit with the shepherd, nor shall he see the cunning hand that aids him in fashioning his musical pipe; nor when the feeling of a new melody grows within him, shall he know that the inspiration is not his own. To some virtuous and bashful youth shall I teach the glowing words which win maidens hearts; and to the lowly and the inspired shall I give fame, which outshines the lustre of rank. But chiefly with young mothers will I delight to dwell; when the child comes first on the knee shall I be nigh them unseen, to delight in the blushing shame and maternal gladness of their looks, and to observe how sedately matron thought writes mother on their brow."

Sir James gazed on the drawer of this domestic picture, and saw the glow of delight shining in his face; and he took his brown hand, and said,

“ O ! that I could but accompany thee, my friend, and unseen myself, enjoy the gladness of the earth, and revel amid pleasures such as thou hast painted. This brow has learned the misery of bearing a crown, and this right hand is acquainted with the sorrow of a sceptre ; in war, too, has my sword bit deep ; and in political counsels I was not always circumvented by the subtlety of other kings. But I have seen the world as a monarch should see it, in the hovel and in the hall, and there is nothing worthy of man’s thought but domestic peace, civil liberty, and social virtue. We would roam the wide earth, and choose our companions, and we would find them more frequently with the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, than among the tribes of men.”

“ Out upon thee for a king ! ” said Brunelfin, “ I know the world better than thou. The hares are sweet companions—so are the cushat doves ; the young thrushes, when they begin to sing ; the bees, when they creep into the foxglove ; and the little velvet mole boring its way under the green sod, and throwing up its habitation in pleasant places. But the child smiling on the new-made mother’s knee is sweeter than all ; the little curly-headed boy, chasing the butterfly on his way to school, and chaunting lines of the hymn he is

learning by heart ; the maiden, when she holds her first tryste with her lover ; and the gray-headed old man, sitting meditating on a well-spent life in the sun at his own threshhold, with his grandchildren sporting like motes in the sunbeam before him. These are companions fit for the angels, and may be comrades to thee."

" Thou sayest well, my servant," said Sir Michael ; " but each creature finds happiness after its nature, its kind, and its capacity. My time on earth is expiring, my mission is fulfilling, superstition is nigh extinguished, the reign of ignorance is coming to a close, the power of the spirits of evil is decayed, civil liberty is dawning upon mankind, and knowledge has come to raise and illumine all. The full splendour of this blessed change I am not permitted to see ; but I know that it will assuredly come to pass." And he looked all around, his stature seemed to augment, a light shone in his eyes, and he said, " Yes, the glory of my native island is establishing, and she shall be the first of all the nations in power and in mercy. From her sword weak seek protection, and find it ; from her wisdom shall the nations learn how to govern ; and she shall fill the whole earth with her fame and her name. The time is coming, when she alone among the nations shall rise up to assert the

dignity of liberty, and the nobleness of human nature, when kings and prime ones of the earth will kneel, and bend the neck, and worship the iron idol which war will set up, she shall launch her spirit upon the ocean, and be the ark to the world to save and replenish it. But the seed groweth not ripe for the sickle on the day it is sown, the tree is not ready for the keel or the mast on the day it is planted ; neither will the victory which Britain has now achievcd over the bands of slavery and superstition, bring forth its full harvest of happiness and glory for many seasons. But liberty will grow, and knowledge shall expand, and the princes of our isle, and the nobles and the people, will see that only in mutual concord and moderation their own happiness and the prosperity of the kingdom can be found.”

The sun, as he spoke, rose into the eastern sky, and land and sea glittered beneath the light. The vessels trimmed their sails, and started from creek and bay ; the early fisherman dropped his net in the advancing tide ; the farmer yoked his horses to his plough, and whistled as he smelt the freshness of the turning furrow ; the shepherd climbed the mountain side with his dogs at his feet, and his flocks before him ; and the thrifty matron, with the first glance of the sun on her window, called

up her maidens; the busy wheel went murmuring to the touch of their feet; the cows, eased of their burthens, went lowing forth to their clover pastures; the din of the blacksmith's anvil was heard from the village; the clink of the mason's hammer came from the neighbouring city, and all the land was called into motion and life.

"I have now seen," said Sir James, "the dark hell, the bright heaven, and the green earth, and all that it contains. As a mortal, I have seen too much for my happiness, for where among the sons of men can I dwell in peace? All is wilfulness, wickedness, discord, and deceit. The light of knowledge is yet in its dawn, and long before the fulness of its day death shall have arrested my career. Civil liberty has, indeed, conquered in the grand strife for its existence; but it has a long war yet to wage with the interests, and the customs, and opinions of the earth. In my native land the crown and the nobles are at strife, and the church has waxed strong with their dissensions. The strong measure the law by the longest sword, the priest has yet the parting struggle to make to keep his power, and the people have to begin their contest for all that renders life delightful. In my own country, even a lodge in one of her wil-

dernes I could not enjoy, for her present sorrows would haunt me, and her future glory is yet distant."

"Look then," said Sir Michael, "to the south; is there not space enough for thy enjoyment there?" "I see," said Sir James, "a licentious king, and a luxurious court; a band of worshippers, who forget the dignity of human nature, and stoop their bodies to the royal bidding, and bring their fair wives and beauteous daughters to augment their shame. With kings and courts I part for ever; I shall retire to some lonesome place and meditate on nature, and through the moon and stars seek to find out God." "The ignorance of mankind," said Sir Michael, "will call thy studies necromancy, and the despot and priest will conduct thee to the dungeon and the stake, for presuming to ponder on things divine, and presuming to think for thyself, and see nature through other eyes than theirs."

"But true scriptural religion and revealed knowledge are now opening up, by means of printing, to mankind," replied Sir James; "and, with the word of God in my hand, I shall wander over the earth and interpret it to the people. Thus shall I go hand in hand with knowledge now new-loosened upon the earth, and aid in the overthrow

of superstition and religious tyranny." "Aye!" said Sir Michael, "thou mayst be called, but I tell thee thou art not one of the chosen. To become a martyr for conscience and scripture's sake is a destiny above thee, and thou hast not firmness and meekness enough to go on the holy task of Reformation, and suffer the mockings and the scourgings, the imprisonings, the rackings, and the torturings of a disciple of the pure faith. This may not be."

Sir James paused awhile, and then said, "Let me do as my royal ancestor did when his throne was withheld from him; he sweetened his solitude by singing of the joys of humble life and the glory of virtue, and his wreath is to day far brighter than his crown?" "Alas!" said Sir Michael, "thou hast of all gifts named that which is a boon of sorrow to its possessor. Think on the fate of the poets whose works now gladden mankind, whose strains are full of joy, and natural emotion, and lofty thought; they were neglected, reviled, persecuted, and starved, they sought for bread which they could not obtain, and were exposed to the scorn and the derision of mankind. No, no! seek not happiness in a calling which merits the applause of mankind, and challenges their admiration. Pimps, panders, and parasites, make their way with princes and nobles, but poets never."

“ You have cured me of my love of Poesie,” said Sir James; “ I shall dive into the bosom of the earth, make her reveal her hidden stores, and tell mankind the history of her ores, her stratas, and her stones.” “ Leave that to the idle, the stupid, and the wealthy,” said Sir Michael; “ let them break stones, and mutter barbarous words over the fractures. Let them grope blindfold amid the dirt which they dig, and proclaim their discoveries in bad Latin, and worse English, and in such Greek as was never spoken.” “ Let me then,” said he, “ ponder on the loveliness of nature, and examine and describe the herbs and the flowers which cover all our fields with beauty, and fill the air with perfume.” “ What !” said the other, “ wouldst thou pin flowers on scraps of paper, paint the splendour of the lily and the fragrance of the rose, and botanize upon thy mother’s grave ? Go, make whistles for boys, gauds for women, saints for the pope, and sceptres for kings, or any other toy which requires some capacity ; but avoid the botanical pest ; and also the plague of moths and caterpillars.”

“ What think you,” said Sir James, “ of tracing the history of the things of old ; our mouldering towers, our circles of stones, and our razed out cities ? ” “ O above all pursuits, it is the most

pleasant and easy," answered the other. " What handsome volumes you may write on parochial molehills, broken pig-troughs, and illegible inscriptions." " Then," said Sir James, " I have no more to say; destiny may do with me as it pleases; my spirit is rebuked and my heart chastened, and I would gladly go into immortal life, or eternal forgetfulness."

" Come with me, Sir Knight," cried Brunelfin, " and taste of all the glad things of the earth, with the merry we shall have mirth, and the choice of the sweet things of creation shall be ours. We shall dance with all the district maidens when the corn is cut, and be merry with the farmer when he houses his grain, and make our lips red with wine, when the grapes are pressed. The honey bee shall give us of her sweets, the brown squirrel shall share with us his hoarded nuts; from the earth shall we dig the most delicious roots, and live on the essence of all that is nourishing and rare. And we shall walk round the home of Elfrida my love, and admire her modesty and beauty."

Sir Michael said, " I hear a voice which you cannot hear, and see a shape you cannot see; and the shape beckons me away, and the voice cries, ' Thy hour is come,' and both I must obey." He

walked sorrowfully down the hill with his companions, and he came to a cavern, the entrance of which seemed seldom trodden, flowers grew around it, and the sun shone in at the mouth. He stood at the entrance, and said, “ Farewell thou blessed sun, thou fresh free air, thou murmuring sea, and thou pleasant earth. Farewell ye pure streams, ye green trees, ye grassy hills, and ye cultured valleys; each has a history gladdening to my heart. Farewell man and farewell woman, farewell beasts of the field, fowls of the air, and farewell ye insects which glitter in the summer sun, and raise a sound heartsome to the ear. Nought that is perishable shall I ever see more, my mission is fulfilled, and I must be gone.” Sir James sobbed, and Brunelfin wept, and they followed him into the cavern. They went in—and no one ever saw them come out from that time to this.

That morning’s sun had risen to near mid-day height, when the young King of Scotland, accompanied by his nobles, pursued the deer over mountain and dale. When he came to the foot of the hill he was thirsty, and called for drink. And one of his knights said, “ In yon cavern there is a pure spring;” so they went in. A sword and a chain of iron lay by the fountain, and on the rock was written, “ A king’s sword and a monarch’s chain.”

And when the young King saw them his colour changed, he looked all around, but no one was there; the tears rushed into his eyes, and he fell on his knees, and cried, “ Where art thou my Father ? ”

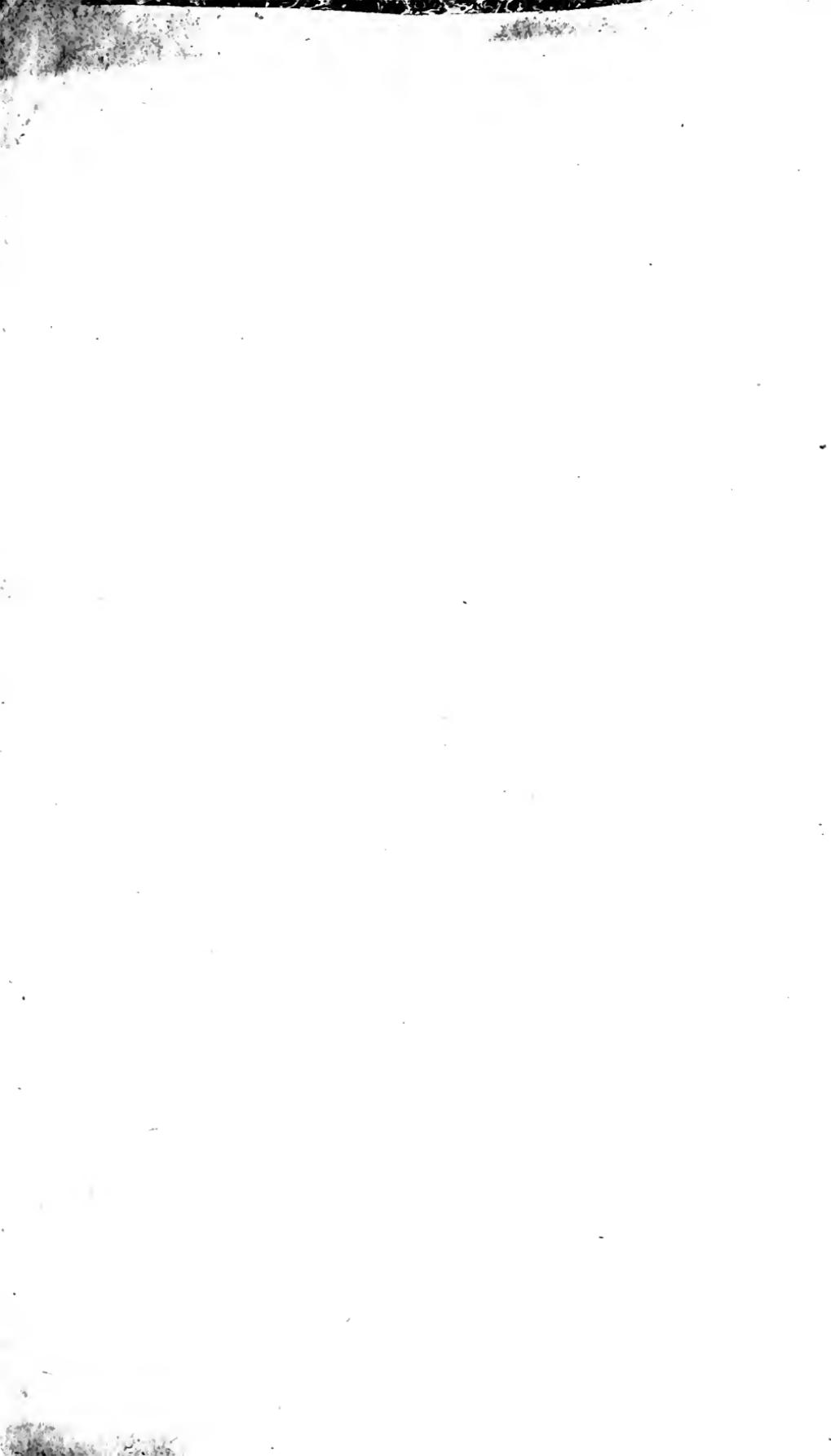
THE END.











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